

CHRISTMAS CARDS



Ah, there, you've missed me, Cousin Hugh!
Now, let me see what I can do

SNOWBALLS.

To send you back a favour fleeting
Of soft white snow, my Christmas greeting.

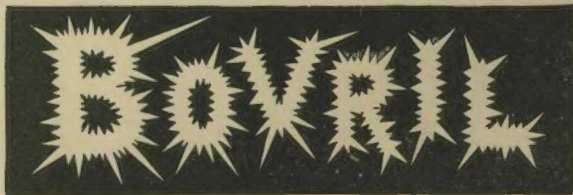
The Wonderful Success of Bovril

and its almost universal use are due to its unique sustaining and stimulating properties, the facility with which it is prepared, and the great variety of ways in which it can be used to advantage.

Choice lean beef is recognised as one of the most nourishing of foods, and Bovril contains in the highest form of concentration ALL the essential principles of the finest beef that the world produces. It consists not only of the stimulating extracts (of which Beef Tea and ordinary beef extracts consist alone), but what is of vastly more importance, of the albumens and fibrines which constitute the vitalising and sustaining features of beef.

Hence Bovril is a valuable substitute for regular meals when these cannot readily be obtained; an invigorator and fortifier of the system against the changes and inclemencies of the weather; a protector against the ravages of disease; and a strengthener in convalescence.

**A cup of Bovril now and then
Is relished by all kinds of men.**



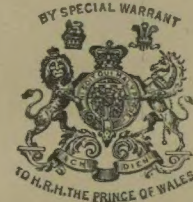
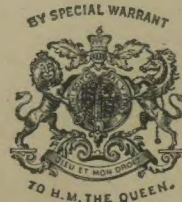
"PERFECT-AND SO PEERLESS."

"TEMPEST," ACT III., SCENE



"No Better Food."

Dr. ANDREW WILSON, F.R.S.E., &c.



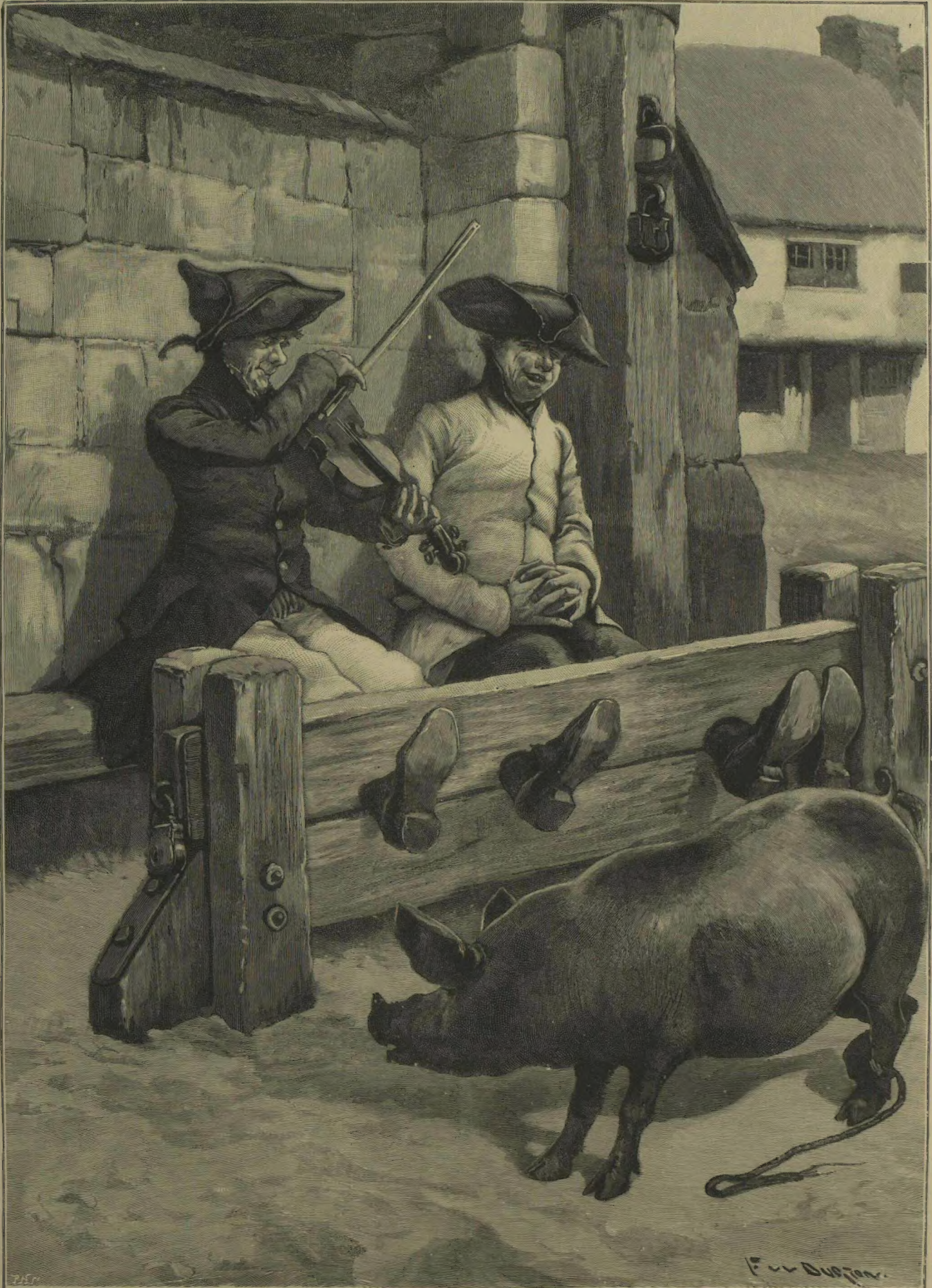
Fry's
PURE CONCENTRATED
Cocoa

*The MEDICAL PRESS, including the "LANCET,"
"BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL," and
"MEDICAL ANNUAL," testifies to its*

Absolute Purity.

300 GOLD MEDALS AND DIPLOMAS.

SOLD ONLY IN TINS WITH GILT TOPS.



For vagrancy by law condemned,
Our friends in shabby wig
Beguile the tedium of the stock
By playing to the pig;

CHRISTMAS IN ADVERSITY.

Yet minstrel Tom and Jerry
Are anything but poor:
Their stake is firmly planted and—
Their stocks are quite secure!



ILLUSTRATED BY R. CATON WOODVILLE.

The story is told by Dom Bartholomew Perestrello, Governor of the Island of Porto Santo.

I.

IT was on the fifteenth day of August, 1428, and about six o'clock in the morning, that while taking the air on the seaward side of my house at Porto Santo, as my custom was after breaking fast, I caught sight of a pinnacle about two leagues distant, and making for the island.

I daresay it is commonly known how I came to the governance of Porto Santo, to hold it and pass it on to my son Bartholomew; how I sailed to it in the year 1420 in company with the two honourable captains, John Gonsalvez Zarco and Tristram Vaz; and what the compact was which we made between us, whereby on reaching Porto Santo these two left me behind and passed on to discover the greater island of Madeira. And many can tell with greater or less certainty of our old pilot, the Spaniard Morales, and how he learned of such an island in his captivity on the Barbary coast. Of all this you shall hear, and perhaps more accurately, when I come to my meeting with the Englishman. But I shall tell first of the island itself, and what were my hopes of it on the morning when I sighted his pinnacle.

In the first warmth of discovering them we never doubted that these were the Purple Islands of King Juba, the very Garden of the Hesperides, found anew by us after so many hundreds of years; or that we had aught to do but sit still in our governments and grow rich while we feasted. But that was in the year 1420, and the eight years between had made us more than eight years sadder. In the other island the great yield of timber had quickly come to an end: for Count Zarco, returning thither with wife and children in the month of May 1421, and purposing to build a city, had set fire to the woods behind the fennel-fields on the south coast, with intent to clear a way up to the hills in the centre: and this fire quickly took such hold on the mass of forest that not ten times the inhabitants could have mastered it. And so the whole island burned for seven years, at times with a heat which drove the settlers to their boats. For seven years as surely as night fell could we in Porto Santo count on the glare of it across the sea to the south-west, and for seven years the caravels of our prince and master, Dom Henry, sighted the flame of it on their way southward to Cape Bojador.

In all this while Count Zarco never lost heart: but, when the timber began to fail, planted his sugar-canes on the scarcely cooled ashes, and his young plants of the Malmsey vine—the one sent from Sicily, the other from Candia, and both by the care of Dom Henry. While he lives it will never be possible to defeat my friend and old comrade: and he and I have both

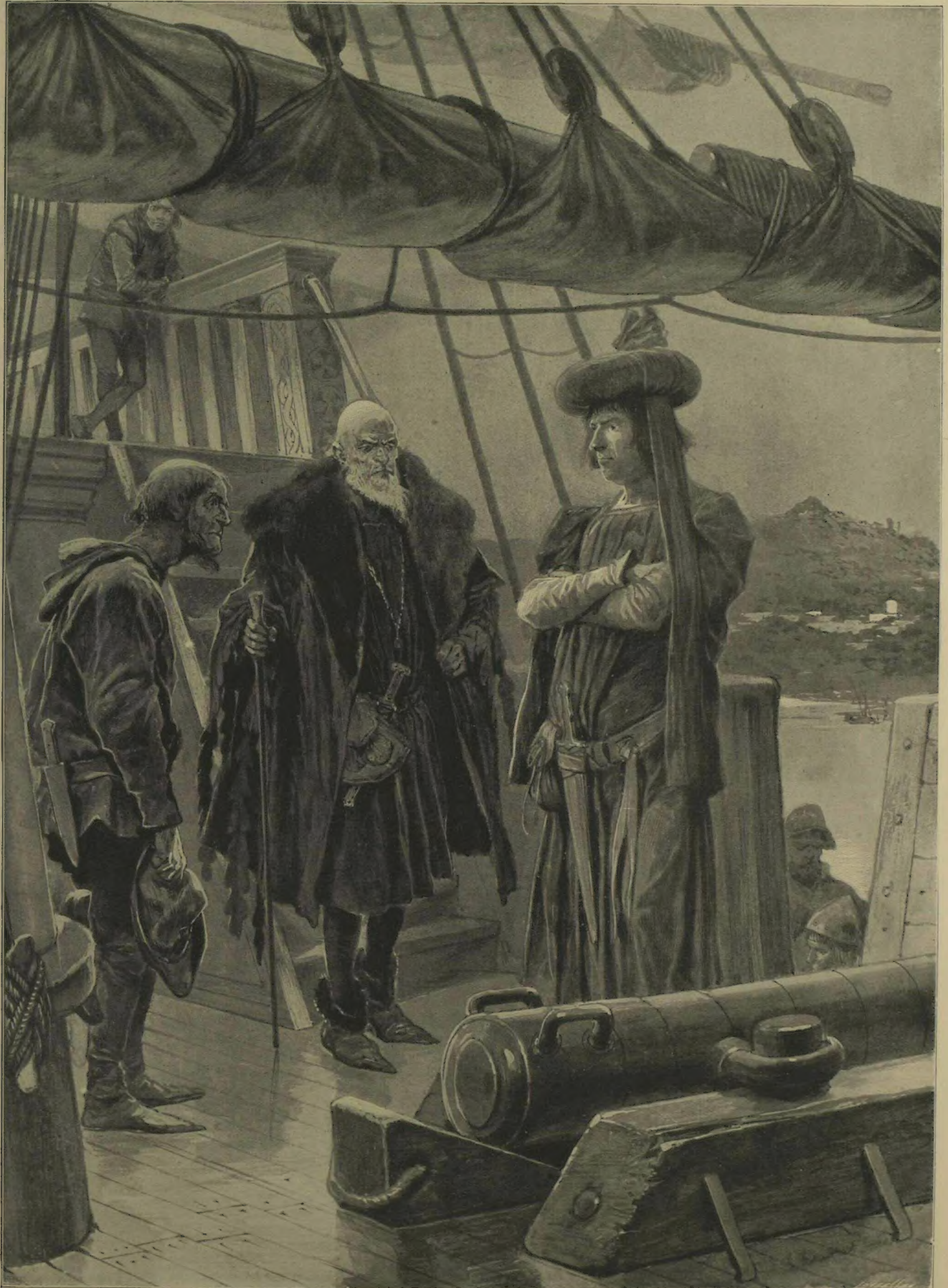
lived to see his island made threefold richer by that visitation which in all men's belief had clean destroyed it.

This planting of vines and sugar-canes began in 1425, the same year in which the Infante gave me colonists for Porto Santo. But if I had little of Count Zarco's merit, it is certain I had none of his luck: for on my small island nothing would thrive but dragon-trees; and we had cut these in our haste before learning how to propagate them, so that we had at the same moment overfilled the market with their gum, or "dragon's blood," and left but a few for a time of better prices. And, what was far worse, at the suggestion surely of Satan, I had turned three tame rabbits loose upon the island; and from the one doe were bred in two or three years so many thousands of these pestilent creatures that when in 1425 we came to plant the vines and canes, not one green shoot in a million escaped. Thus it happened that by 1428 my kingdom had become but a barren rock, dependent for its revenues upon the moss called the orchilla weed, of which the darker and better kind could be gathered only by painful journeys inland.

You may see, therefore, that I had little to comfort me as I paced before my house that morning. I was Governor of an impoverished rock on which I had wasted the toil and thought of eight good years of my prime: my title was hereditary, but I had in those days no son to inherit it. And when I considered the fortune I had exchanged for this, and my pleasant days in Dom Henry's service at Sagres, I accused myself for the most miserable among men.

Now, at the north-western angle of my house, and a little below the terrace where I walked, there grew a plantation of dragon-trees, one of the few left upon the island. Each time this sentry-walk of mine brought me back to the angle, I would halt before turning and eye the trees, sourly pondering on our incredible folly. For, on my first coming they had grown everywhere, and some with trunks great enough to make a boat for half-a-dozen men: but we had cut them down for all kinds of uses, whenever a man had wanted wood for a shield or a bushel for his corn, and now they scarce grew fruit enough to fatten the hogs. It was standing there and eyeing my dragon-trees that over the tops of them I caught sight of the pinnacle plying towards the island. I remember clearly what manner of day it was; clear and fresh, the sea scarce heaving, but ruffled under a southerly breeze. The small vessel, though well enough handled, made a sorry leeway by reason of her over-tall sides, and lost so much time at every board through the labour of lowering and rehoisting her great lateen yard, that I judged it would take her three good hours before she came to anchor in the port below.

I could not find that she had any hostile appearance, yet—as my duty was—sent down word to the guard to challenge her business before admitting



The interpreter began, "This is a gentleman of England."

"D'ARFET'S VENGEANCE," BY "Q."

her; and a little before nine o'clock I put on my coat and walked down to the haven to look after this with my own eyes. I arrived almost at the moment when she entered and her crew, with sail partly lowered, rounded her very cleverly up in the wind.

The guard-boat put off at once and boarded her; and by-and-by came back with word that the pinnacle was English (which by this time I had guessed), by name the *George of Bristol*, and owned by an Englishman of quality, who, by reason of his extreme age, desired of my courtesy that I would come on board and confer with him. This at first I was unwilling to risk: but seeing her moored well under the five guns of our fort, and her men so far advanced with the furling of her big sail that no sudden stroke of treachery could be attempted except to her destruction, I sent word to the gunners to keep a brisk look-out, and stepping into the boat was pulled alongside.

At the head of the ladder there met me an aged gentleman, lean and bald and wrinkled, with narrow eyes and a skin like clear vellum. For all the heat of the day he wore a furred cloak which reached to his knees; also a thin gold chain around his neck: and this scrag neck and the bald head above it stood out from his fur collar as they had been a vulture's. By his dress and the embroidered bag at his girdle, and the clasps of his furred shoes, I made no doubt he was a rich man; and he leaned on an ebony staff or wand capped with a pretty device of ivory and gold.

He stood thus, greeting me with many bobs of the head as a bird makes when pecking an apple; and at first he poured out a string of salutations (I suppose) in English, a language with which I have no familiarity. This he perceived after a moment, and seemed not a little vexed; but covering himself and turning his back shuffled off to a door under the poop.

"Martin!" he called in a high broken voice. "Martin!"

A little man of my own country, very yellow and foxy, came running out, and the pair talked together for a moment before advancing towards me.

"Your Excellency," the interpreter began, "this is a gentleman of England who desires that you will dine with him to-day. His name is Master Thomas d'Arfet, and he has some questions to put to you, of your country, in private."

"D'Arfet?" I mused: as my brows went up at the name I caught the old gentleman watching me with an eye which was sharp enough within its dulled rim. "Will you answer that I am at his service, but on the one condition that he comes ashore and dines with me."

When this was reported at first Master d'Arfet would have none of it, but rapped his staff on the desk and raised a score of objections in his scolding voice. Since I could understand none of them, I added very firmly that it was my rule; that he could be carried up to my house on a litter without an ache of his bones; and, in short, that I must either have his promise or leave the ship.

He would have persisted, I doubt not; but it is ill disputing through an interpreter, and he ended by giving way with a very poor grace. So ashore we rowed him with the man Martin, and two of my guard conveyed him up the hill in a litter, on which he sat for all the world like a peevish cross'd child. In my great airy dining-room he seemed to cool down and pick up his better humour by degrees. He spoke but little during the meal, and that little was mainly addressed to Martin, who stood behind his chair: but I saw his eyes travelling around the panelled walls and studying the portraits, the furniture, the neat table, the many comforts which it clearly astonished him to find on this forsaken island. Also he as clearly approved of the food and of my wine of Malmsey. Now and then he would steal a look at my wife Beatrix, or at one or the other of my three daughters, and again gaze out at the sea beyond the open window, as though trying to piece it all together into one picture.

But it was not until the womenfolk had risen and retired that he unlocked his thoughts to me. And I hold even now that his first question was a curious one.

"Dom Bartholomew Perestrello, are you a happy man?"

Had it come from his own lips it might have found me better prepared: but popped at me through the mouth of an interpreter, a servant who (for all his face told) might have been handing it on a dish, his question threw me out of my bearings.

"Well, Sir," I found myself answering, "I hope you see that I have much to thank God for." And while this was being reported to him I recalled with a twinge my dejected thoughts of the morning. "I have made many mistakes," I began again.

But without seeming to hear, Master d'Arfet began to dictate to Martin, who, after a polite pause to give me time to finish if I cared to, translated in his turn.

"I have told you my name. It is Thomas d'Arfet, and I come from Bristol. You have heard my name before?"

I nodded, keeping my eyes on his.

"I also have heard of you, and of the two captains in whose company you discovered these islands."

I nodded again.

"Their names," said I, "are Gonsalvez Zarco and Tristram Vaz. You may visit them, if you please, on the greater island, which they govern between them."

He bent his head. "The fame of your discovery, Sir, reached England some years ago. I heard at the time, and paid it just so much heed as one

does pay to the like news—just so much and no more. The manner of your discovery of the greater island came to my ears less than a twelvemonth ago, and then but in rumours and broken hints. Yet here am I, close on my eightieth year, voyaging more than half across the world to put those broken hints together and resolve my doubts. Tell me"—he leaned forward over the table, peering eagerly into my eyes—"there was a tale concerning the island—concerning a former discovery—"

"Yes," said I, as he broke off, his eyes still searching mine, "there was a tale concerning the island."

"Brought to you by a Spanish pilot, who had picked it up on the Barbary coast?"

"You have heard correctly," said I. "The pilot's name was Morales."

"Well, it is to hear that tale that I have travelled across the world to visit you."

"Ah, but forgive me, Sir!" I poured out another glassful of wine, drew up my chair, rested both elbows on the table and looked at him over my folded hands. "You must first satisfy me what reason you have for asking."

"My name is Thomas d'Arfet," he said.

"I do not forget it: but maybe I should rather have said—What aim you have in asking. I ought first to know that, methinks."

In his impatience he would have leapt from his chair had his old limbs allowed. Pressing the table with white finger-tips, he sputtered some angry words of English, and then fell back on the interpreter Martin, who from first to last wore a countenance fixed like a mask.

"Mother of Heaven, Sir! You see me here, a man of eighty, broken of wind and limb, palsied, with one foot in the grave: you know what it costs to fit out and victual a ship for a voyage: you know as well as any man, and far better than I, the perils of these infernal seas. I brave those perils, undergo those charges, drag my old limbs these thousands of miles from the vault where they are due to rest—and you ask me if I have any reason for coming!"

"Not at all," I answered. "I perceive rather that you must have an extraordinarily strong reason—a reason or a purpose clean beyond my power of guessing. And that is just why I wish to hear it."

"Men of my age—" he began, but I stopped Martin's translation midway.

"Men of your age, Sir, do not threaten the peace of such islands as these. Men of your age do not commonly nurse dangerous schemes. All that I can well believe. Men of your age, as you say, do not chase a wild-goose so far from their chimney-side. But men of your age are also wise enough to know that governors of colonies—ay," for my words were being interpreted to him a dozen at a time, and I saw the sneer grow on his face, "even of so poor a colony as this—do not give up even a small secret to the very first questioner."

"But the secret is one no longer. Even in England I had word of it."

"And your presence here," said I, "is proof enough that you learned less than you wanted."

He drew his brows together over his narrow eyes. I think what first set me against the man was the look of those eyes, at once malevolent and petty. You may see the like in any man completely ungenerous. Also the bald skin upon his skull was drawn extremely tight, while the flesh dropped in folds about his neck and under his lean chaps, and the longer I pondered this the more distasteful I found him.

"You forget, Sir," said he—and while Martin translated he still seemed to chew the words—"the story is not known to you only. I can yet seek out the pilot himself."

"Morales? He is dead these three years."

"Your friends, then, upon the greater island. Failing them, I can yet put back to Lagos and appeal to the Infante himself—for doubtless he knows. Time is nothing to me now." He sat his chin obstinately, and then, not without nobility, pushed his glass from him and stood up. "Sir," said he, "I began by asking if you were a happy man. I am a most unhappy one, and (I will confess) the unhappier since you have made it clear that you cannot or will not understand me. In my youth a great wrong was done me. You know my name, and you guess what that wrong was: but you ask yourself, 'Is it possible this old man remembers, after sixty years?' Sir, it is possible, nay, certain; because I have never for an hour forgotten. You tell yourself, 'It cannot be this only: there must be something behind.' There is nothing behind; nothing. I am the Thomas d'Arfet whose wife betrayed him just sixty years ago; that, and no more. I come on no State errand, I! I have no son, no daughter; I never, to my knowledge, possessed a friend. I trusted a woman and she poisoned the world for me. I acknowledge in return a duty to no man but myself; I have voyaged thus far out of that duty. You, Sir, have thought it fitter to baffle than to aid me—well and good. But by the Christ above us I will follow that duty out; and, at the worst, death, when it comes, shall find me pursuing it!"

He spoke this with a passion of voice which I admired before his man began to interpret: and even when I heard it repeated in level Portuguese, and had time to digest it and extract its monstrous selfishness, I could look at him with compassion, almost with respect. His cheeks had lost their flush almost as rapidly as they had taken it on, and he stood now awkwardly pulling at his long bony fingers until the joints cracked.

"Be seated, Sir," said I. "It is clear to me that I must be a far happier man than I considered myself only this morning, since I find nothing in myself which, under any usage of God, could drive me on such a pursuit as yours would seem to be. I may perhaps, without hypocrisy, thank God that I cannot understand you. But this, at any rate, is clear—that you seek only a private satisfaction: and although I cannot tell you the story here and now, something I will promise. As soon as you

give the Count his free choice. If you knew him," I added, "you would know such a promise to be superfluous."

II.

My own pinnace arrived in sight of Funchal two mornings later, and a little after sunrise. We had outsailed the Englishman, as I promised, and lay



We drew up our chairs to the table, and I began.

please I will sail with you to the greater island, and we will call together on Count Zarco. In his keeping lies one of the two copies of Morales' story as we took it down from his lips at Sagres, or, rather, compiled it after much questioning. It shall be for the Count to produce or withhold it, as he may decide. He is a just man, and neither one way nor the other will I attempt to sway him."

Master d'Arfet considered for a while. Then said he, "I thank you: but will you sail with me in my pinnace or in your own?"

"In my own," said I, "as I suspect you will choose to go in yours. I promise we shall outsail you: but I promise also to await your arriving, and

off-and-on for more than two hours before he came up with us. I knew that Count Zarco would be sitting at this time in the sunshine before his house and above the fennel plain, hearing complaints and administering justice: I knew, moreover, that he would recognise my pinnace at once: and from time to time I laughed to myself to think how this behaviour of ours must be puzzling my old friend.

Therefore I was not surprised to find him already arrived at the quay when we landed; with a groom at a little distance holding his magnificent black stallion. For I must tell you that my friend was ever, and is to this day, a big man in all his

ways—big of stature, big of voice, big of heart, and big to lordliness in his notions of becoming display. None but Zarco would have chosen for his title, "Count of the Chamber of the Wolves," deriving it from a cave where his men had started a herd of sea-calves on his first landing and taking seizin of the island. And the black stallion he rode when another would have been content with a mule; and the spray of fennel in his hat; and the ribbon, without which he never appeared among his dependents; were all a part of his large nature, which was guileless and simple withal as any child's.

Now, for all my dislike, I had found the old Englishman a person of some dignity and command: but it was wonderful how, in Zarco's presence, he shrank to a withered creature, a mere applejack without juice or savour. The man (I could see) was eager to get to business at once, and could well have done without the ceremony of which Zarco would not omit the smallest trifle. After the first salutations came the formal escort to the Governor's house; and after that a meal which lasted us two hours; and then the Count must have us visit his new sugar-mills and inspect the Candia vines freshly pegged out, and discuss them. On all manner of trifles he would invite Master d'Arfet's opinion: but to show any curiosity or to allow his guests to satisfy any, did not belong to his part of host—a part he played with a thoroughness which diverted me while it drove the Englishman well-nigh mad.

But late in the afternoon, and after we had worked our way through a second prodigious meal, I had compassion on the poor man, and taking (as we say) the bull by both horns, announced the business which had brought us. At once Zarco became grave.

"My dear Bartholomew," said he, "you did right, of course, to bring Master d'Arfet to me. But why did you show any hesitation?" Before I could answer he went on. "Clearly, as the lady's husband, he has a right to know what he seeks. She left him: but her act cannot annul any rights of his which the Holy Church gave him, and of which, until he dies, only the Holy Church can deprive him. He shall see Morales' statement as we took it down in writing: but he should have the story from the beginning: and since it is a long one, will you begin and tell so much as you know?"

"If it please you," said I, and this being conveyed to Master d'Arfet, while Zarco sent a servant with his keys for the roll of parchment, we drew up our chairs to the table, and I began.

"It was in September 1419," said I, "when the two captains, John Gonsalvez Zarco and Tristram Vaz, returned to Lagos from their first adventure in these seas.

I was an equerry of our master, the Infante Henry, at that time, and busy with him in rebuilding and enlarging the old arsenal on the neck of Cape Sagres; whence, by his wisdom, so many expeditions have been sent forth since to magnify God and increase the knowledge of the world.

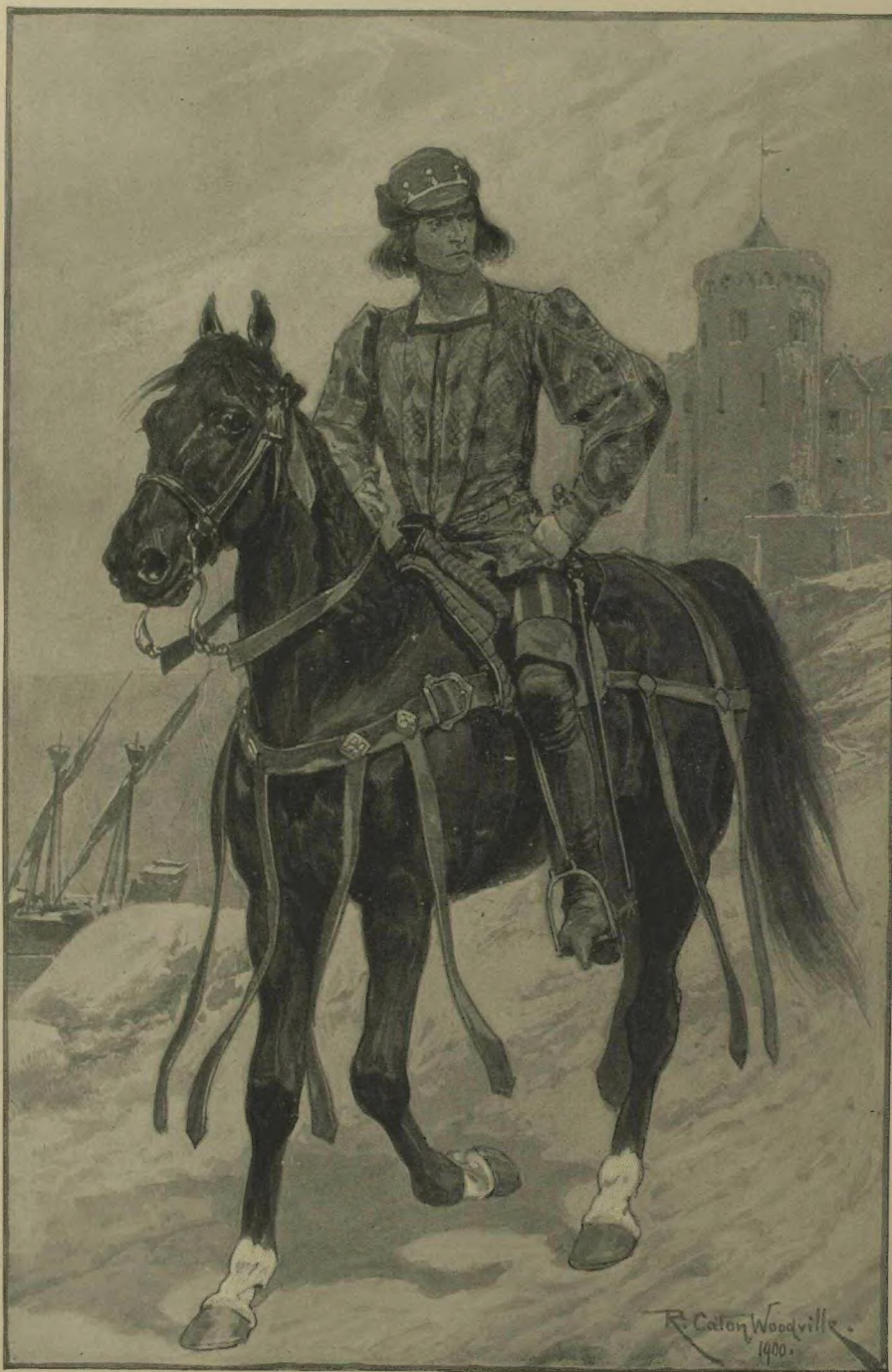
"We had built already the chapel and the library, with its map-room, and the Prince and I were busy there together on the plans for his observatory in the late afternoon, when the caravels were sighted: and the news being brought, his Highness left me at work while he rode down to the port to receive his captains. I was still working by lamplight in the map-room when he returned, bringing them and a third man, the old Spaniard Morales.

"Seating himself at the table, he bade me leave my plans, draw my chair over, and take notes in writing of the captains' report. Zarco told the story—he being first in command, and Tristram Vaz a silent man, then and always: and save for a question here and there, the Prince listened without comment, deferring to examine it until the whole had been related.

"Now, in one way, the expedition had failed, for the caravels had been sent to explore the African coast beyond Cape Bojador, and as far south as might be; whereas they had scarcely put to sea before a tempest drove them to the westward, and far from any coast at all. Indeed, they had no hope left, nor any expectation but to founder, when they sighted the island; and so came by God's blessing to the harbour which, in their joy, they named Porto Santo. There, finding their caravels strained beyond their means to repair for a long voyage, and deeming that this discovery well outweighed their first purpose, they stayed but a sufficient time to explore the island, and so put back for Lagos. But their good fortune was not yet at an end: for off the Barbary coasts they fell in with and

captured a Spaniard containing much merchandise and two score of poor souls ransomed out of captivity with the Barbary corsairs. 'And among them,' said my friend Gonsalvez, 'your Highness will find this one old man, if I mistake not, to be worth the charges of two such expeditions as ours.'

"Upon this we all turned our eyes upon the Spaniard, who had been shrinking back as if to avoid the lamplight. He must have been a tall, upstanding man in his prime; but now, as Tristram Vaz drew him forward, his knees bowed as if he cringed for some punishment. 'Twas a shock, this fawning carriage of a figure so venerable: but when Tristram Vaz drew off the decent doublet he wore and displayed his back, we wondered no longer. Zarco pushed him into a chair and held a lamp while the Prince examined the man's right foot, where an ankle-ring had bitten it so that to his death (although it scarcely hindered



His Highness rode down to the port to receive his captains.

his walking) the very bone showed itself naked between the healed edges of the wound.

"Moreover, when Zarco persuaded him to talk in Spanish it was some while before we could understand more than a word or two here and there. The man had spent close upon thirty years in captivity, and his native speech had all but dried up within him. Also he had no longer any thought of difference between his own country and another: it was enough to be among Christians again: nor could we for awhile disengage that which was of moment from the rambling nonsense with which he wrapped it about. He, poor man! was concerned chiefly with his own sufferings, while we were listening for our advantage: yet as Christians we forbore while he muttered on, and when a word or two fell from him which might be of service, we recalled him (I believe) as gently as we could.

trimmed it carefully, unfolded his parchment, spread it on the table, and began to read very deliberately in his rolling voice, pausing and looking up between the sentences while the man Martin translated—

"This is the statement made to me by Roger Prance, the Englishman, Anno MCCCCIX., at various times in the month before he died.

"He said: My name is Roger Prance. I come from St. Lawrence on the River Jo,* in England. From a boy I followed the sea in the ships of Master Canynge,† of Bristol, sailing always from that port with cargoes of wool, and mostly to the Baltic, where we filled with stock-fish: but once we went south to your own city of Cadiz, and returned with wines and a little spice purchased of a Levantine merchant in the port. My last three voyages were taken in the *Mary*



"In a shore-boat comes our master, with a young man and woman well wrapped."

"Well, the chaff being sifted away, the grain came to this: His name was Morales, his birthplace Cadiz, his calling that of pilot: he had fallen (as I have said) into the hands of the Moors about thirty years before: and at Azamor, or a little inland, he had made acquaintance with a fellow-prisoner, an Englishman, by name Roger Prince, or Prance. This man had spent the best part of his life in captivity, and at one time had changed his faith to get better usage: but his first master dying at a great age, he passed to another, who cruelly ill-treated him. Under this man's abominable punishments he quickly sank, and, indeed, lay at the point of death when Morales happened upon him. Upon some small act of kindness such as one slave may do for another, the two had made friends: and thus Morales came to hear the poor Englishman's story."

Here I broke off and nodded to the Count, who called for a lamp. And so for a few minutes we all sat without speech in the twilight, the room silent save for the cracking of Master d'Arfet's knuckles. When at length the lamp arrived, Zarco

Radelyf or Redcliffe. One afternoon" [the year he could not remember, but it may have been 1373 or 1374] "I was idle on the Quay near Vyell's tower, when there comes to me Gervase Hancock, master, and draws me aside, and says he: 'The vessel will be ready sooner than you think,' and named the time—to wit, by the night next following. Now I, knowing that she had yet not any cargo on board, thought him out of his mind: but said he, 'It is a secret business, and double pay for you if you are ready and hold your tongue between this and then.'

"So at the time he named I was ready with the most of our old crew, and all wondering; with the ship but half ballasted as she came from the Baltic, and her rigging not seen to, but moored down between the marshes at the opening of the River Avon.

"At ten o'clock then comes a whistle from the shore, and anon in a shore-boat our master with a young man and woman well wrapped, and presently

* Wick St. Lawrence on the Yeo, in Somerset.

† Grandfather of the famous merchant, William Canynge.

cuts the light hawser we rode by; and so we dropped down upon the tide and were out to sea by morning.

"All this time we knew nothing of our two passengers; nor until we were past the Land's End did they come on deck. But when they did, it was hand in hand and as lovers; the man a mere youngster, straight, and gentle in feature and dress, but she the loveliest lady your eyes ever looked upon. One of our company, Will Tamblyn, knew her at once—as who would not that had once seen her?—and he cried out with an oath that she was Mistress d'Arfet, but newly married to a rich man a little to the north of Bristol. Afterwards, when Master Gervase found that we knew so much, he made no difficulty to tell us more; as that the name of her lover was Robert Machin or Macham, a youth of good family, and that she it was who had hired the ship, being an heiress in her own right.

"We held southward after clearing the land; with intent, as I suppose, to make one of the Breton ports. But about six leagues from the French coast a tempest overtook us from the north-east and drove us beyond Channel, and lasted with fury for twelve days, all of which time we ran before it, until on the fourteenth day we sighted land where never we looked to find any, and came to a large island, thickly wooded, with high mountains in the midst of it.

"Coasting this island we soon arrived off a pretty deep bay, lined with cedar-trees: and here Master Machin had the boat lowered and bore his mistress to land—for the voyage had crazed her, and plainly her time for this world was not long. Six of us went with them in the boat, the rest staying by the ship, which was anchored not a mile from shore. There we made for the poor lady a couch of cedar-boughs with a spare sail for awning, and her lover sat beside her for two nights and a day, holding of her hand and talking with her, and wiping her lips or holding the cup to them when she moaned in her thirst. But at dawn of the second day she died.

"Then we, who slept on the beach at a little distance, being waked by his terrible cry, looked up and supposed he had called out for the loss of the ship. Because the traitors on board of her, considering how that they had the lady's wealth, had weighed or slipped anchor in the night (for certainly there was not wind enough to drag by), and now the ship was nowhere in sight. But when we came to Master Machin he took no account of our news: only he sat like a statue and stared at the sea, and then at his dead lady, and 'Well,' he said; 'is she gone?' We knew not whether he meant the lady or the ship: nor would he taste any food though we offered it, but turned his face away.

"So that evening we buried the body, and five days later we buried Master Machin beside her, with a wooden cross at their heads. Then, not willing to perish on the island, we caught and killed four of the sheep which ran wild thereon, and having stored the boat with their flesh (and it was bitter to taste), and launched it, steered, as well as we could contrive, due east. And so on the eleventh day we were cast on the coast near to Mogador: but two had died on the way. Here (for we were starving and could offer no fight) some Moors took us, and carrying us into the town, sold us into that slavery in which I have passed all my miserable life since. What became of the *Mary Radclyf* I have never heard: nor of the three who came ashore with me have I had tidings since the day we were sold."

Here Zarco came to the end of his reading: and facing again on Master d'Arfet (who sat pulling his fingers while his mouth worked as if he chewed something) I took up the tale.

"All this, Sir, by little and little the pilot Morales told us, there in the Prince's map-room: and you may be sure we kept it to ourselves. But the next spring our royal master must fit out two caravels to colonise Porto Santo; with corn and honey on board, and sugar-canes and vines and (that ever I should say it!) rabbits. Gonsalvez was leader, of course, with Tristram Vaz: and to my great joy the Prince appointed me third in command.

"We sailed from Lagos in June and reached Porto Santo without mishap. Here Gonsalvez found all well with the colonists he had left behind on his former visit. But of one thing they were as eager to tell as of their prosperity: and we had not arrived many hours before they led us to the top of the island and pointed to a dark line of cloud (as it seemed) lying low in the south-west. They had kept watch on this (they said) day by day, until they had made certain it could not be a cloud, for it never altered its shape. While we gazed at it I heard the pilot's voice say suddenly at my shoulder, 'That will be the island, Captain—the Englishman's island!' and I turned and saw that he was trembling. But Gonsalvez, who had been musing, looked up at him sharply. 'All my life,' said he, 'I have been sailing the seas, yet never saw landfall like yonder. That which we look upon is cloud and not land.' 'But who,' I asked, 'ever saw a fixed cloud?' 'Marry, I for one,' he answered, 'and every seaman who has sailed beside Sicily! But say nothing to the men; for if they believe a volcano lies yonder we shall hardly get them to cross.' 'Yet,' said Morales, 'by your leave, Captain, that is no volcano, but such a cloud as might well rest over the thick moist woodlands of which the Englishman told me.' 'Well, that we shall discover by God's grace,' Gonsalvez made answer. 'You will cross thither?' I asked. 'Why to be sure,' said he cheerfully, with a look at Tristram Vaz; and Tristram Vaz nodded, saying nothing.

"Yet he had no easy business with his sailors, who had quickly made up their own minds about this cloud and that it hung over a pit of fire. One or two had heard tell of Cipango, and allowed this might be that lost wandering land. 'But how can we tell what perils await us there?' 'Marry, by going and finding out,' growled Tristram Vaz, and this was all the opinion he uttered. As for Morales, they would have it he was a Castilian, a foreigner, and only too eager to injure us Portuguese.

"But Gonsalvez had enough courage for all: and on the ninth morning he and Tristram set sail, with their crews as near mutiny as might be. Me they left to rule Porto Santo. 'And if we never come back,' said Gonsalvez, 'you will tell the Prince that *something* lies yonder which we would have found, but our men murdered us on the way——'"

"My dear brother Bartholomew," Gonsalvez broke in, "you are wearying Master d'Arfet, who has no wish to hear about *me*." And taking up the tale he went on: "We sailed, Sir, after six hours into as thick a fog as I have met even on these seas, and anon into a noise of breakers which seemed to be all about us. So I prayed to the Mother of Heaven and kept the lead busy, and always found deep water: and more by God's guidance than our management we missed the Desertas, where a tall bare rock sprang out of the fog so close on our larboard quarter that the men cried out it was a giant in black armour rising out of the waves. So we left it and the noises behind, and by-and-by I shifted the helm and steered towards the east of the bank, which seemed to me not so thick thereabouts: and so the fog rolled up and we saw red cliffs and a low black cape, which I named the Cape of St. Lawrence. And beyond this, where all appeared to be marshland, we came to a forest shore with trees growing to the water's edge and filling the chasms between the cliffs. We were now creeping along the south of the island, and in clearer weather, but saw no good landing until Morales shouted aft to me that we were opening the Gulf of Cedars. Now I, perceiving some recess in the cliffs which seemed likely to give a fair landing, let him have his way: for albeit we could never win it out of him in words, I knew that the Englishman must have given him some particular description of the place, from the confidence he had always used in speaking of it. So now we had cast anchor, and were well on our way shoreward in the boat before I could be certain what manner of trees clothed this Gulf: but Morales never showed doubt or hesitancy; and being landed, led us straight up the beach and above the tide-mark to the foot of a low cliff, where was a small pebbled mound and a plain cross of wood. And kneeling beside them I prayed for the souls' rest of that lamentable pair, and so took seizin of the island in the names of our King John, Prince Henry, and the Order of Christ. That, Sir, is the story, and I will not weary you by telling how we embarked again and came to this plain which lies at our feet. So much as I believe will concern you you have heard: and the grave you shall look upon to-morrow."

Master d'Arfet had left off cracking his joints, and for a while after the end of the story sat drumming with his finger-tips on the table. At length he looked up, and says he—

"I may suppose, Count Zarco, that as governor of this island you have power to allot and sell estates upon it on behalf of the King of Portugal?"

"Why, yes," answered Gonsalvez; "any new settler in Funchal must make his purchase through me: the northern province of Machico I leave to Tristram Vaz."

"I speak of your southern province, and indeed of its foreshore, the possession of which I suppose to be claimed by the crown of Portugal."

"That is so."

"To be precise I speak of this Gulf of Cedars, as you call it. You will understand that I have not seen it: I count on your promise to take me thither to-morrow. But it may save time, and I shall take it as a favour if—without binding yourself or me to any immediate bargain—you can give me some notion of the price you would want for it. But perhaps"—here he lifted his eyes from the table and glanced at Gonsalvez cunningly—"you have already conveyed that parcel of land, and I must deal with another."

Now Gonsalvez had opened his mouth to say something, but here compressed his lips for a moment before answering.

"No: it is still in my power to allot."

"In England just now," went on Master d'Arfet, "we should call ten shillings an acre good rent for unstocked land. We take it at sixpence *per annum* rent and twenty years' purchase. I am speaking of reasonably fertile land, and hardly need to point out that in offering any such price for mere barren foreshore I invite you to believe me half-witted. But, as we say at home, he who keeps a fancy must pay a tax for it: and a man of my age with no heir of his body can afford to spend as he pleases."

Gonsalvez stared at him, and from him to me, with a puzzled frown.

"Bartholomew," said he, "I cannot understand this gentleman. What can he want to purchase in the Gulf of Cedars but his wife's grave? And yet of such a bargain how can he speak as he has spoken?"

I shook my head. "It must be that he is a merchant, and is too old to speak but as a haggler. Yet I am sure his mind works deeper than this haggling." I paused, with my eyes upon Master d'Arfet's hands, which were hooked now like claws over the table which his fingers still pressed: and this gesture of his put a sudden abominable thought in my mind

"Yes, he wishes to buy his wife's grave. Ask him——" I cried, and with that I broke off.

But Gonsalvez nodded. "I know," said he softly, and turned to the Englishman. "Your desire, Sir, is to buy the grave I spoke of?"

Master d'Arfet nodded.

"With what purpose? Come, Sir, your one chance is to be plain with us. It may be the difference in our race hinders my understanding you: it may be I am a simple captain and unused to the ways and language of the market. In any case put aside the question of price, for were that all between us I would say to you as Ephron the Hittite said to Abraham. 'Hear me, my lord,' I would say, 'what is four hundred shekels of silver betwixt me and thee? Bury therefore thy dead.' But between you and me is more than this: something I cannot fathom. Yet I must know it before consenting. I demand therefore, What is your purpose?"

Master d'Arfet met him straightly enough with those narrow eyes of his, and said he, "My purpose, Count, is as simple as you describe

or Robert Machin: and though I would be buried in their grave, it shall not be beside them."

"How then?" cried Gonsalvez and I in one voice.

"I would be buried, Sirs, not beside but between them. Ah? Your eyes were moist, I make no doubt, when you first listened to the pretty affecting tale of their love and misfortune? Not yet has it struck either of you to what a hell they left *me*. And I have been living in it ever since! Think: I loved that woman. She wronged me hatefully, meanly: yet she and he died together, feeling no remorse. It is I who keep the knowledge of their vileness which shall push them asunder as I stretch myself at length in my cool dead ease, content, with my long purpose achieved, with the vengeance prepared, and nothing to do but wait securely for the Day of Judgment. Pardon me, Sirs, that I say 'this shall be,' whereas I read in your faces that you refuse me. I have cheered an unhappy life by this one promise, which at the end I have thrown away upon a little scruple." He passed a hand over his eyes and stood up. "It is curious," he said, and stood musing. "It is curious," he repeated, and



He led me away to the warm slopes to see how his young vines were doing.

your mind to be. Honest seaman, I desire that grave only that I may be buried in it."

"Then my thought did you wrong, Master d'Arfet, and I crave your pardon. The grave is yours without price. You shall rest in the end beside the man and woman who wronged you, and at the Last Day when you rise together may God forgive you as you forgave them!"

The Englishman did not answer for near a minute. His fingers had begun to drum on the table again and his eyes were bent upon them. At length he raised his head, and this time to speak slowly and with effort—

"In my country, Count, a bargain is a bargain. When I seek a parcel of ground, my purpose with it is my affair only: my neighbour fixes his price, and if it suit me I buy, and there's an end. Now I have passed my days in buying and selling and you count me a huckster. Yet we merchants have our rules of honour as well as you nobles: and if in England I bargain as I have described, it is because between me and the other man the rules are understood. But I perceive that between you and me the bargain must be different, since you sell on condition of knowing my purpose, and would not sell if my purpose offended you. Therefore to leave you in error concerning my purpose would be cheating: and, Sir, I have never cheated in my life. At the risk then, or the certainty, of losing my dearest wish I must tell you this—I *do not forgive my wife Anne*

turning to Gonsalvez said in a voice empty of passion, "You refuse me, I understand?"

"Yes," Gonsalvez answered. "I salute you for an honest gentleman: but I may not grant your wish."

"It is curious," Master d'Arfet repeated once more, and looked at us queerly, as if seeking to excuse his weakness in our judgment. "So small a difficulty!"

Gonsalvez bowed. "You have taught us this, Sir, that the world speaks at random, but in the end a man's honour rests in no hands but his own."

Master d'Arfet waited while Martin translated; then he put out a hand for his staff, found it, turned on his heel and tottered from the room, the interpreter following with a face which had altered nothing during our whole discourse.

* * * * *

Master d'Arfet sailed at daybreak, having declined Gonsalvez' offer to show him the grave. My old friend insisted that I must stay a week with him, and from the terrace before his house we watched the English pinnacle till she rounded the point to eastward and disappeared.

"After all," said I, "we treated him hardly."

But Gonsalvez said: "A husk of a man! All the blood in him sour—and yet," he mused, "the husk kept him noble after a sort."

And he led me away to the warm slopes to see how his young vines were doing.

THE END.



In the refectory grumbling is high:
"Who does he tarry?" the brethren exclaim,
"Is Brother Bonaccord, winking his eye,
A tarry?" "The reason is easy to name."

A COVETED MISSION.

Now, my lord Abbot, if you had but sent
Me to the cellar instead of our brother,
Less of our time had been wantonly spent."
"Truly: but haply more ale," says another.

THE

CONSCIENCE-
PUDDING.A CHRISTMAS STORY
ABOUT THE BASTABLES.

BY E. NESBIT.

ILLUSTRATED BY JOHN HASSALL.



IT was Christmas, nearly a year after Mother died. I cannot write about Mother, but I will just say one thing. If she had only been away for a little while, and not for always, we shouldn't have been so keen on having a Christmas. I didn't understand this then, but I am much older now; and I think it was just because everything was so different and horrid we felt we *must* do something, and perhaps we were not particular enough *what*. Things make you much more unhappy when you loaf about than when you are doing events.

Father had to go away just about Christmas. He had heard that his wicked partner, who ran away with his money, was in France, and he thought he could catch him. But really he was in Spain, where catching criminals is never practised. We did not know this till afterwards.

Before Father went away he took Dora and Oswald into his study, and said—

"I'm awfully sorry I've got to go away—but it is very serious business, and I must go. You'll be good while I'm away, kiddies, won't you?"

We promised faithfully.

Then he said: "There are reasons—you wouldn't understand if I tried to tell you—but you can't have much of a Christmas this year. But I've told Matilda to make you a good plain pudding. Perhaps next Christmas will be brighter."

(It was; for the next Christmas saw us the affluent nephews and nieces of an Indian uncle. But that is quite another story, as good old Kipling says.)

When Father had been seen off at Lewisham Station, with his bags and a plaid rug in a strap, we came home again, and it was horrid. There were papers and things littered all over his room where he had packed. We tidied the room up: it was the only thing we could do for him. It was Dicky who accidentally broke his shaving-glass, and H. O. made a paper boat out of a letter we found out afterwards Father particularly wanted to keep. This took us some time, and when we went into the nursery the fire was black out, and we could not get it alight again, even with the whole *Daily Chronicle*. Matilda, who was our general then, was out, as well as the fire, so we went and sat in the kitchen. There is always a good fire in kitchens. The kitchen hearthrug was not nice to sit on, so we spread newspapers on it.

It was sitting in the kitchen, I think, that brought to our minds my Father's parting words—about the pudding, I mean.

Oswald said: "Father said we couldn't have much of a Christmas for secret reasons, and he said he had told Matilda to make us a plain pudding."

The plain pudding instantly cast its shadow over the deepening gloom of our young minds.

"I wonder *how* plain she'll make it?" Dicky said.

"As plain as plain, you may depend," said Oswald. "A here-am-I-where-are-you pudding; that's her sort."

The others groaned, and we gathered closer round the fire till the newspapers rustled madly.

"I believe I could make a pudding that *wasn't* plain, if I tried," Alice said. "Why shouldn't we?"

"No chink," said Oswald, with brief sadness.

"How much would it cost?" Noel asked, and added that Dora had two pence, and H. O. had a French halfpenny.

Dora got the cookery-book out of the dresser-drawer, where it lay doubled up among clothes-pegs, dirty dusters, scallop shells, string, penny novelettes, and the dining-room corkscrew. The general we had then, it seemed as if she did all the cooking on the cookery-book instead of on the baking-board, there were traces of so many old bygone meals upon its pages.

"It doesn't say Christmas pudding at all," said Dora.

"Try plum," the resourceful Oswald instantly counselled.

Dora turned the greasy pages anxiously.

"Plum-pudding, 518. A rich with flour, 517. Christmas, 517. Cold brandy sauce for, 241—we shouldn't care about that, so it's no use looking. 'Good, without eggs, 518. Plain, 518'—we don't want *that* anyhow. 'Christmas, 517'—that's the one."

It took her a long time to find the page. Oswald got a shovel of coals and made up the fire. It blazed up like the devouring elephant the *Daily Telegraph* always calls it. Then Dora read—

"'Christmas Plum-pudding. Time, six hours.'"

"To eat it in?" said H. O.

"No, silly—to make it. Forge ahead, Dora!" Dicky replied.

Dora went on—

"'2072. One pound and a half of raisins, half a pound of currants, three-quarters of a pound of bread-crumbs, half a pound of flour, three-quarters of a pound of beef-suet, nine eggs, one wineglassful of brandy, half a pound of citron and orange-peel, half a nutmeg, and a little ground ginger.' I wonder *how* little ground ginger?"

"A teacupful would be enough, I think," Alice said. "We must not be extravagant."

"We haven't got anything yet to be extravagant *with*," said Oswald, who had toothache that day. "What would you do with the things if you'd got them?"

"You'd 'chop the suet as fine as possible'—I wonder how fine that is?" replied Dora and the book together; "'and mix it with the bread-crumbs and flour; add the currants washed and dried.'"

"Not starched then?" said Alice.

"The citron and orange-peel cut into thin slices'—I wonder what they call thin: Matilda's thin bread-and-butter is quite different from what I mean by it—'and the raisins stoned and divided.' How many heaps would you divide them into?"

"Seven, I suppose," said Alice; "one for each person and one for the pot—I mean pudding."

"Mix it all well together with the grated nutmeg and ginger, then stir in nine eggs well beaten, and the brandy'—we'll leave that out, I think—'and again mix it thoroughly together that every ingredient may be moistened; put it into a buttered mould, tie over tightly, and boil for six hours. Serve it ornamented with holly and brandy poured over it.'"

"I should think holly and brandy poured over it would be simply beastly," said Dicky.

"I expect the book knows. I daresay holly and water would do as well though.—'This pudding may be made a month before'—it's no use reading about that though, because we've only got four days to Christmas."

"It's no use reading about any of it," said Oswald, with thoughtful repeatedness, "because we haven't got the things, and we haven't got the coin to get them."

"We might get the tin somehow," said Dicky.

"There must be lots of kind people who would subscribe to a Christmas pudding for poor children who hadn't any," Noël said.

"Well, I'm going skating at Penn's," said Oswald. "It's no use thinking about puddings. We must put up with it plain."

So he went, and Dicky with him.

When they returned to their home in the evening the fire had been lighted again in the nursery, and the others were just having tea. We toasted our bread-and-butter on the bare side, and it gets a little warm among the butter as well.

Oswald did not feel quite sure Father would like us to go asking for shillings and sixpences, or even half-crowns, from strangers—but he did not say so. The money had been asked for and got, and it couldn't be helped, and perhaps he wanted to have the pudding. I am not able to remember exactly why he did not speak up and say, "This is wrong"—but anyway he didn't.

Alice and Dora went out and bought the things next morning. They bought double quantities, so that it came to five shillings and elevenpence, and was enough to make a noble pudding. There was a lot of holly left over for decorations—we used very little for the sauce. The money that was left we spent very anxiously in other things to eat, such as dates and figs and toffee.

We did not tell Matilda about it. She was a red-haired girl, and apt to turn waxy at the least thing.

Concealed under our jackets and overcoats we carried the parcels up to the nursery, and hid them in the treasure-chest we had then. It was the bureau



Alice and Dora went out and bought the things next morning.

This is called French toast. I like English better, but it is more expensive. Alice said—

"Matilda's in a frightful rage about your putting those coals on the kitchen fire, Oswald. She says we shan't have enough to last over Christmas as it is. And Father gave her a talking-to before he went about them—asked her if she ate them, she says—but I don't believe he did. Anyway, she's locked the coal-cellar door, and she's got the key in her pocket. I don't see how we can boil the pudding."

"What pudding?" said Oswald dreamily. He was thinking of a chap he had seen at Penn's, who had cut the date 1898 on the ice with four strokes.

"The pudding," Alice said. "Oh, we've had such a time, Oswald! First, Dora and I went to the shops to find out exactly what the pudding would cost—it's only two-and-elevenpence halfpenny, counting in the holly."

"It's no good," Oswald repeated—he is very patient, and will say the same thing any number of times—"it's no good. You know we've got no tin."

"Ah," said Alice, "but Noël and I went out, and we called at some of the big houses in Granville Park and Dartmouth Hill, and we got a lot of sixpences and shillings, besides pennies, and one old gentleman gave us half-a-crown. He was so nice: quite bald, with a knitted red-and-blue waistcoat. We've got eight-and-sevenpence."

drawer. It was locked up afterwards because the treacle got all over the green baize and the little drawers inside it, while we were waiting to begin to make the pudding. It was the grocer told us we ought to put treacle in the pudding—and also about not so much ginger as a teacupful.

When Matilda had begun to pretend to scrub the floor (she pretended this three times a week so as to have an excuse not to let us into the kitchen, but I know she used to read novelettes most of the time, because Alice and I had a squint through the window more than once) we barricaded the nursery-door and set to work. We were very careful to be quite clean. We washed our hands as well as the currants. I have sometimes thought we did not get all the soap off the currants. The pudding smelt like a washing-day when the time came to cut it open. And we washed a corner of the mahogany table to chop the suet on. Chopping suet looks easy till you try.

Father's machine he weighs letters with did to weigh out the things. We did this very carefully, in case the grocer had not done so. We could only weigh four ounces at a time, or the things toppled over. Everything was right except the raisins. H. O. had carried them home. He was very young then, and we found there was a hole in the corner of the paper-bag, and his mouth was sticky. Lots of people have been hanged to a gibbet in chains on evidence no worse than that,

and we told H. O. so till he cried. This was good for him. It was not unkindness to H. O., but part of our duty.

Chopping suet as fine as possible is much harder than anyone would think, as I said before. So is crumbling bread—especially if your loaf is hot and new, like ours was. When we had done them the breadcrumbs and the suet were both very large and lumpy, and of a dingy grey colour, something like pale slate-pencil. They looked a little better colour when we had mixed them with the flour.

The girls had washed the currants with Brown Windsor soap and the sponge. Some of the currants got inside of the sponge, and kept coming out in the bath for days afterwards. I see now that this was not quite nice. We cut the candied peel as thin as we wish people would cut our bread-and-butter. We tried to take the stones out of the raisins, but they were too sticky, so we just divided them up in seven lots. Then we mixed the other things in the wash-hand basin from the spare bed-room that was always spare. We each put in our own lot of raisins, and turned it all into a pudding-basin, and tied it up in one of Alice's pinafores, which was the nearest thing to a proper pudding-cloth we could find—at any rate, the nearest clean thing.

What was left of the pudding sticking to the wash-hand basin did not taste bad.

"It's a little bit soapy," Alice said, "but perhaps that will boil out, like stains in table-cloths."

It was a difficult question how to boil the pudding. Matilda proved furious when asked to let us—just because someone had happened to knock her Sunday hat off the scullery-door, and Pincher had got it and done for it. However, part of the embassy nicked a saucepan while the others were being told what Matilda thought about the hat, and we got hot water out of the bath-room and made it boil over our nursery fire. We put the pudding in—it was now getting on towards the hour of tea—and let it boil. With some exceptions, owing to the fire going down, and Matilda not hurrying up with coals, it boiled for an hour and a quarter. Then Matilda came suddenly in and said—

"I'm not going to have you messing about in here with my saucepans!" And she tried to take it off the fire. You will see that we couldn't stand this; it was not likely. I do not remember who it was that told her to mind her own business, and I think I have forgotten who caught hold of her just to make her chuck it. I am sure no needless violence was used. Any way, while the struggle progressed Alice and Noël took the saucepan away and put it in the boot-cupboard under the stairs, and hid the key.

This sharp encounter made everyone very hot and cross. We got over it before Matilda did, but we brought her round before bed-time. Quarrels should always be made up before you go to bed. It says so in the Bible. If this simple rule was followed there would not be so many wars and martyrs and law suits and Inquisitions and bloody deaths at the stake.

When all the house was still; when the gas was out all over the house except on the first landing, several darkly shrouded figures might have been observed creeping downstairs to the kitchen.

On the way, with superior precaution, we got out our saucepan. The kitchen fire was red but low; the coal-cellar was locked, and there was nothing in the scuttle but a little coal-dust, and the piece of brown paper that is put in to keep the coals from tumbling out through the bottom where the hole is.

We put the saucepan on the fire, and plied it with fuel—two *Chronicles*, a *Telegraph*, and two *Family Herald Novels*—were burned in vain. I am almost sure the pudding did not boil at all that night.

"Never mind," Alice said. "We can each nick a piece of coal every time we go into the kitchen to-morrow."

This daring scheme was faithfully performed, and by night we had nearly half a waste-paper basket of coal, coke, and cinders. And in the depth of night once more we might have been observed, this time with our collier-like waste-paper basket in our guarded hands.

There was more fire left in the grate that night, and we fed it with the fuel we had collected. This time the fire blazed up and the pudding boiled like mad. That was the time it boiled two hours. At least I think it was about so long, but we dropped asleep on the kitchen-tables and on the dresser. You dare not be lowly in the night in the kitchen, because of the beetles. We were aroused by a horrible smell. It was the pudding-cloth burning. All the water had secretly boiled itself away. We filled it up at once with cold, and the saucepan cracked. So we cleaned it and put it back on the shelf and took another, and went to bed. You see what a lot of trouble we had over the pudding. Every evening till Christmas, which had now become only the day after to-morrow, we sneaked down in the inky midnight and boiled that pudding for as long as it would.

On Christmas morning we chopped the holly for the sauce, but we put hot water (instead of brandy) and moist sugar. Some of them said it was not so bad. Oswald was not one of these.

Then came the moment when the plain pudding Father had ordered smoked upon the board. Matilda brought it in and went away at once. She

had a cousin out of Woolwich Arsenal to see her that day, I remember. Those far-off days are quite distinct in memory's recollection still.

Then we got out our own pudding from its hiding-place and gave it one last hurried boil—only seven minutes, because of the general impatience, which Oswald and Dora could not cope with.

We had found means to secrete a dish, and we now tried to dish the pudding up; but it stuck to the basin, and had to be dislodged with the chisel. The pudding was horribly pale. We poured the holly-sauce over it, and Dora took up the knife and was just cutting it when a few simple words from H. O. turned us from happy and triumphant cookery artists to persons in despair.



Matilda had begun to pretend to scrub the floor.

He said: "How pleased all those kind ladies and gentlemen would be if they knew *we* were the poor children they gave the shillings and sixpences and things for!"

We all said "What?" It was no moment for politeness.

"I say," H. O. said, "they'd be glad if they knew it was *us* was enjoying the pudding, and not dirty little, really poor children."

"You should say 'we were,' not 'us was,'" said Dora—but it was as in a dream and only from habit.

"Do you mean to say," Oswald spoke firmly yet not angrily, "that you and Alice went and begged for money for poor children—and then *kept* it?"

"We didn't keep it," said H. O., "we spent it."

"We've kept the *things*, you little duffer," said Dicky, looking at the pudding sitting alone and uncared for on its dish, "you begged for money for poor children and then *kept* it—it's stealing, that's what it is. I don't say so much about you—you're only a silly kid—but Alice knew better. Why did you do it?"

H. O. said: "It couldn't be Alice's fault. I don't see as it was wrong."

"That," not "as," murmured Dora, putting her arm round the sinner who had brought this degrading blight upon our family tree—but such is girls' undetermined and affectionate silliness—"tell sister all about it, H. O., dear. Why couldn't it be Alice's fault?"

H. O. cuddled up to Dora, and said, still snuffling in his nose—

"Because she hadn't got nothing to do with it. I collected it all. She never went into one of the houses; she didn't want to."

"And then took all the credit of getting the money," said Dicky savagely.

Oswald said: "Not much *credit*," in scornful tones.

"Oh, you are *beastly*—the whole lot of you, except Dora," Alice said, stamping her foot in rage and despair. "I tore my frock on a nail going out, and I didn't want to go back—and I got H. O. to go to the houses alone, and I waited for him outside. And I asked him not to say anything, because I didn't want Dora to



A shabby man with a hole in his left boot.

He turned to Alice, but she was now too deep in tears to get a word out.

H. O. looked a bit frightened, but he answered the question. We have taught him this. He said—

"I thought they'd give us more if I said poor children than if I said just us."

"That's cheating," said Dicky. "Downright, beastly, mean, low cheating!"

"I'm not," said H. O., "and you're another!" Then he began to cry too. I do not know how the others felt, but I understand from Oswald that he felt that now the honour of the house of Bastable had been stamped on in the dust, and it didn't matter what happened. He looked at the beastly holly that had been left over from the sauce, and was stuck up over the pictures. It now appeared hollow and disgusting, though it had got quite a lot of berries, and some of it was the varied kind—green and white. The figs and dates and toffee were set out in the doll's dinner-service. The very sight of it all made Oswald blush sickly. He owns he would have liked to cuff H. O., and, if he did for a moment wish to shake Alice, the author, for one, can make allowances.

Now Alice choked and spluttered, and wiped her eyes fiercely, and said: "It's no use ragging H. O. It's my fault, I'm older than he is."

know about the frock—it's my best. And I don't know what he said inside. He never told me. But I'll bet anything he didn't *mean* to cheat."

"You *said* lots of kind people would be ready to give money to get pudding for poor children, so I asked them to."

Oswald, with his strong right hand, waved a wave of passing things over.

"We'll talk about that another time," he said; "just now we've got weightier things to deal with."

He pointed to the pudding, which had grown cold during the conversation to which I have alluded. H. O. stopped crying, but Alice went on with it. Oswald now said—

"We're a base and outcast family. Until that pudding's out of the house we shan't be able to look anyone in the face. We must see that that pudding goes to poor children—not grizzling, grumpy, whiney-piney, pretending poor children—but real poor ones, just as poor as they can stick."

"And the figs too—and the dates?" said Noël, with regretting tones.

"Every fig," said Dicky sternly. "Oswald is quite right."

This honourable resolution made us feel rather better. We hastily put on our best things and washed ourselves a bit, and hurried out to find some really poor people to give the pudding to. We cut it in slices ready and put it in a basket,

with the figs and dates and toffee. We would not let H. O. come with us at first because he wanted to, and Alice would not come because of him. So at last we had to let him. The excitement of tearing into your best things heals the hurt that wounded honour feels, as the poetry-writer said; or, at any rate, it makes the hurt feel better.

We went out into the streets. They were pretty quiet; nearly everybody was eating its Christmas dessert. But presently we met a woman in an apron.

Oswald said, very politely—

"Please, are you a poor person?" And she told us to get along with us.

The next we met was a shabby man with a hole in his left boot.

Again Oswald said, "Please, are you a poor person, and have you any poor little children?"

The man told us not to come any of our games with him or we should laugh on the wrong side of our faces. We went on sadly—we had no heart to stop and explain to him that we had no games to come.

The next was a young man near the Obelisk. Dora tried this time.

She said, "Oh, if you please, we've got some Christmas pudding in this basket—and if you're a poor person you can have some."

"Poor as Job!" said the young man in a hoarse voice; and he had to come up out of a red comforter to say it.

We gave him a slice of the pudding, and he bit into it without thanks or delay. The next minute he had thrown the pudding-slice slap in Dora's face, and was clutching Dicky by the collar.

"Bloomey, if I don't chuck ye in the river, the whole bloomin' lot of you!" he exclaimed.

The girls screamed, the boys shouted, and though Oswald threw himself on the insulter of his sister with all his manly vigour, yet but for a friend of Oswald's, who is in the police, passing at that instant, the author shudders to think what might have happened, for he was a strong young man, and Oswald is not yet come to his full strength, and the Quaggy runs all too near.

Our policeman led our assailant aside, and we waited anxiously, as he told us to. After long uncertain moments the young man in the comforter loafed off grumbling, and our policeman turned to us—

"Said you give him a dollop o' pudding, and it tasted of soap and hair-oil."

I suppose the hair-oil must have been the Brown-Windsoriness of the soap coming out. We were sorry, but it was still our duty to get rid of the pudding. The Quaggy was handy, it is true, but when you have collected money to feed poor children and spent it on pudding, it is not right to throw that pudding in the river. People do not subscribe shillings and sixpences and half-crowns to feed a hungry flood with Christmas pudding.

Yet we shrank from asking any more people whether they were poor persons, or about their families, and still more from offering the pudding to chance people, who might bite into it and taste the soap before we had time to get away.

It was Alice, the most paralysed with disgrace of all of us, who thought of the best idea.

She said "Let's take it to the workhouse. At any rate, they're all poor people there, and they mayn't go out without leave, so they can't pursue us to do anything to us after the pudding. No one would give them leave to go out to chase people who had brought them pudding and wreak vengeance on them, and at any rate we shall get rid of the Conscience-Pudding—it's a sort of conscience-money, you know, only it isn't money, but pudding."

The workhouse is a good way, but we stuck to it, though very cold, and hungrier than we thought possible when we started, for we had been so agitated we had not even stayed to eat the plain pudding our good Father had so kindly and thoughtfully ordered for our Christmas dinner.

The big bell at the workhouse made a man open the door to us when we rang it. Oswald said (and he spoke because he is next eldest to Dora, and she had had jolly well enough of saying anything about pudding). He said—

"Please we've brought some pudding for the poor people."

The man looked us up and down, and he looked at our basket. Then he said—

"You'd better see the Matron."

We waited in a hall, feeling more and more uncomfy, and less and less like Christmas. We were very cold indeed, especially our hands and our noses. And we felt less and less able to face the Matron if she was horrid, and one of us at least wished we had chosen the Quaggy for the pudding's long home, and made it up to the robbed poor in some other way afterwards. Just as Alice was saying earnestly in the burning cold ear of Oswald, "Let's put down the basket and make a bolt for it. Oh, Oswald, let's!" a lady came along the passage. She was very upright, and she had eyes that went through you like blue gimlets. I should not like to be obliged to thwart that lady if she had any design, and mine was opposite. I am glad this is not likely to occur.

She said, "What's all this about a pudding?"

H. O. said at once, before we could stop him—

"They say I've stolen the pudding, so we've brought it here for the poor people."

"No, we didn't"—"That wasn't why"—"The money was given"—"It was meant for the poor"—"Shut up, H. O.," said the rest of us all at once.

Then there was an awful silence. The lady gimletted us again, one by one, with her blue eyes.

Then she said, "Come into my room. You all look frozen."

She took us into a very jolly room with red velvet curtains and a big fire, and the gas lighted, because now it was almost dark even out of doors. She gave us chairs, and Oswald felt as if his was a dock, he felt so criminal, and the lady looked so judgular.

Then she took the armchair by the fire herself, and said: "Who's the eldest?"

"I am," said Dora, looking more like a frightened white rabbit than I've ever seen her.

"Then tell me all about it."

Dora looked at Alice and began to cry. That slab of pudding in the face had totally unnerved the gentle girl. Alice's eyes were red, and her face was puffy with crying, but she spoke up for Dora, and said—

"Oh—please let Oswald tell. Dora can't, she's tired with the long walk, and a young man threw a piece of it in her face, and—"

The lady nodded, and Oswald began. He told the story from the very beginning, as he has always been taught to, though he hated to lay bare the family honour's wound before a stranger, however judge-like and gimlet-eyed.

He told all, not concealing the pudding-throwing, nor what the young man said about soap.

"So," he ended, "we want to give the Conscience-Pudding to you. It's like conscience-money—you know what that is, don't you? But if you really think it



She was very upright.

is soapy, and not just the young man's horridness, perhaps you'd better not let them eat it. But the figs and things are all right."

When he had done, the lady said (for most of us were crying more or less

"Come, cheer up! It's Christmas-time, and he's very little—your brother, I mean. And I think the rest of you seem pretty well able to take care of the honour of the family. I'll take the Conscience-Pudding off your minds. Where are you going now?"

"Home, I suppose," Oswald said. And he thought how nasty and dark and dull it would be—our fire out most likely, and Father away.

"And your Father's not at home, you say," the blue-gimlet lady went on. "What do you say to having tea with me, and then seeing the entertainment we have got up for our old people?"

Then the lady smiled, and blue-gimlets looked quite merry.

The room was so warm and comfortable, and the invitation was the last thing we expected. It was jolly of her, I do think.

After tea it was the entertainment. Songs and conjuring, and a play called "Box and Cox," very amusing, and a lot of throwing things about in it, bacon and chops and things, and nigger minstrels. We clapped till our hands were sore.

When it was over we said "Good-bye." In between the songs and things Oswald had had time to make up a speech of thanks to the lady. He said—

"We all thank you heartily for your goodness. The entertainment was beautiful. We shall never forget your kindness and hospitality."

The lady laughed, and said she had been very pleased to have us. A fat gentleman said—

"And your teas? I hope you enjoyed those, eh?"

Oswald had not had time to make up an answer to that, so he answered straight from the heart, and said—

"Rather!"

And everyone laughed and slapped us boys on the back and kissed the girls



The gentleman who played the bones in the nigger minstrels saw us home.

No one thought quite at first of saying how pleased we should be to accept her kind invitation. Instead we all just said, "Oh!"—but in a tone which must have told her we meant "Yes, please!" very deeply.

Oswald (this has more than once happened) was the first to restore his manners. He made a proper bow like he has been taught, and said—

"Thank you very much. We shall like it very much. It is very much nicer than going home. 'Thank you very much.'"

I need not tell the reader that Oswald could have made up a much better speech if he had had more time to make it up in, or if he had not been so filled with mixed flusteredness and furification by the shameful events of the day.

We washed our faces and hands, and had a first-rate mullin-and-crumpety tea, with slices of cold meat, and many nice jams and cakes. A lot of other people were there—most of them people who were giving the entertainment to the aged poor.

and the gentleman who played the bones in the nigger minstrels saw us home. We ate the cold pudding that night, and H. O. dreamed that Something came to eat him, like it advises you to in the advertisements on the hoardings. The grown-ups said it was the pudding, but I don't think it could have been that, because, as I have said more than once, it was so very plain.

Some of H. O.'s brothers and sisters thought it was a judgment on him for pretending about who the poor children were he was collecting the money for. Oswald does not believe such a little boy as H. O. would have a real judgment made just for him and nobody else, whatever he did.

But it certainly is odd. H. O. was the only one who had bad dreams, and he was also the only one who had got any of the things we bought with that ill-gotten money; because, you remember, he picked a hole in the raisin-paper as he was bringing the parcel home. The rest of us had nothing, unless you count the scrapings of the pudding-basin, and those don't really count at all.

THE END.



To your bright eyes this cup I drain.
 To your fair lips I make salute.
 Have you no answer but disdain?
 Nay, eyes can speak though lips be mute.

THE TOAST.

Heretere, sweet maiden, in your eyes
 I read what lips are shy to say;
 And deem from your fearless gaze
 Brighter than ever Christmas Day.



AN OLD-TIME CHRISTMAS REVEL.

"In 1400 one Captain John Gladman, a man ever true and faithful to God and the King, and sportive withal, made public diapers at Christmas. He traversed the town on a horse as gaily caparisoned as himself, preceded by the Twelve Months, each dressed in character. After him crept the pale, attenuated figure of Lent, clothed in herring-skins, and mounted on a sorry nag—a hint of the fast that ever tracks the feast in the rhythm of the life of body or spirit."



She sees a vision through the night,
And wonders will the time be long

THE GOLD-SEEKER'S CHRISTMAS:
HER DREAM OF HIM.

Till he has found the fortune bright
That shall attune their wedding song.



And he who 'neath the inclement sky
Seeks treasure in the stubborn soil

THE GOLD-SEEKER'S CHRISTMAS:
HIS DREAM OF HER.

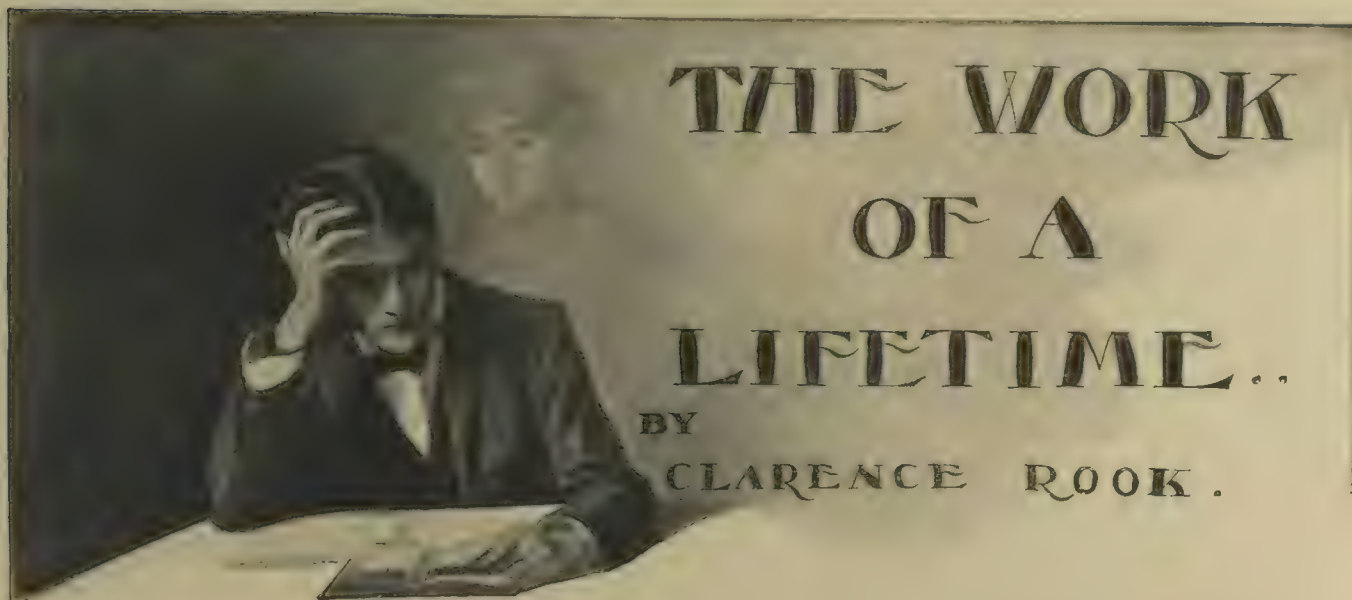
Desires her beckoning phantasy,
And, cheered at heart, renews his toil.



The maids come tripping out of church,
And look demure and shy;
They know the lads are watching them
With most observant eye.

CHRISTMAS MORNING: AFTER CHURCH.

Sweet Madge behind gives Timothy
A signal on the sly,
And Mrs. Cackle watches her
With most observant eye!



ILLUSTRATED BY J. F. BAILLIOL SALMON.

WE were all quite certain that, whatever might befall the rest of us, Bobby Margetson would come out on top. I am speaking of the seven or eight of us whom midnight left smoking and talking together in my old rooms at Oxford a dozen years ago. There were those among us who looked forward to a first in Greats, of whom some can now look back upon the same. There were others who were drawn towards the stage, and are now supported by it. But Bobby was the man in whom we all had supreme confidence. He was a mathematical genius; he revelled in conic sections, and delighted in inventing the most amazing problems for our puzzling, and then offering the simplest and most artistic of solutions. The rest of us shared the usual ignorance of Oxford men as to mathematics. But we looked forward with complete assurance to Bobby's career. He would sweep the board of University prizes; he would collar a Fellowship, a University Professorship, and pass his life in the unsullied atmosphere of pure mathematics, descending once in a while to the lower world with a *magnum opus* under his arm.

Most of this came true. By the time he was nine-and-twenty Bobby Margetson had attained to his Professorship, and mysterious letters, shed upon him by learned societies, began to accumulate after his name. It was our custom, when any member of our old college set was about to marry, to dine solemnly together and compare notes as to our progress through life; and at these gatherings, of which there were five in seven years, it was generally agreed that Bobby was the only one who so far had really fulfilled the promise of his youth. When we held our wake over Baker—who was beginning to do moderately well at the Bar—Debenham, of the Stock Exchange, told me that Bobby Margetson would shortly annex the bun with a work of original research which was calculated to give an archangel a headache.

"Lies very low, Bobby does," said Debenham, looking over at Bobby, who was propounding a problem with which a monkey, a rope, and a weight were mixed up. "But he'll knock 'em. He's working at

it night and day up at Oxford, they tell me. Something about fluxions—or vortex rings—or something. I expect they'll give him a peerage before he's done."

The next day I was walking along Oxford Street with Bobby. Oxford Street is a very long one, and the numbers over the shop-fronts run well into the hundreds.

Bobby was walking with a curious sideways lift of the head. I noticed, too, that in the afternoon sunshine his face, always tense and thin, was more haggard than usual; lines running from the corner of his eye were plainly visible. He was talking volubly—he was always a great talker—when suddenly he broke off.

"That's a remarkable figure!"

I looked instinctively for something in skirts. But Bobby was staring at the number over one of the shop-windows.

"I can't factorise it!" he exclaimed.

"Well, what does it matter?" I asked.

"Oh, I always factorise the numbers over the shops as I walk along—keeps the mind from stagnating. I can generally do it while I'm talking of something else."

He stood in the middle of the pavement looking at me with pursed lips and a slight frown.

"Ah, yes, of course," he said, after a moment or so, "it's all right. Made me quite nervous for a moment. I said: my brain was failing."

"You're a rum chap, Bobby," I said. "Don't you ever give your brain a rest?"

After that there was no further difficulty, and I presume Bobby factorised all the numbers to his satisfaction until we reached the Circus, when we took a cab.

It was only a month or two later that I ran against Debenham in the street, and obtained an astonishing batch of news about Bobby Margetson. He had inherited a house like the picture on a Christmas-card somewhere in the Chippenham district, he had come into a



Mrs. Napier Edwardes looked at me.

baronetcy, he had thrown up his Professorship, and he was about to marry the daughter of a Balliol don.

"It's like the eternal cussedness of things," said Debenham. "Here's Bobby with plenty of money that he doesn't know how to spend, with some rippin' shooting—and never handles a gun, and a wife to worry about, when he ought to be thinking about his *magnum opus*."

"Well, he'll have more leisure to work on it down in the country," I suggested.

"I hear he's fitted up a sort of shrine of pure mathematics down at Marston Hall," said Debenham; "hung it round with fluxions variegated with vortex rings. Oh, he'll knock 'em, sooner or later, Bobby will! But I shouldn't have thought a really pretty girl like Nita Masters— However, there's the title."

A week later I went abroad, and for nearly three years I heard nothing of Bobby but an occasional hint in a rare letter from Debenham, whence I gathered that Bobby was engaged in the last round of his struggle with the fluxions—or whatever they were—and that the *magnum opus* was near completion.

* * *

Paddington in a fog was quite home-like after nearly three years of stewing in Bombay, with a very occasional run up to Poona. It was fog of the old school, and I loved it as it embraced me and put my train out of sight. Looking for my train, I ran into the arms of Mrs. Napier Edwardes.

"Why, Tony, how delightful," she exclaimed; "and you're going down to Chippenham!"

"How did you know that?" I asked.

"Oh! I'm a clairvoyant, and I knew, though I haven't seen you for years. Come! I've got an empty carriage here."

"Are you clairvoyant enough to find the train?" I murmured, as she pulled me by my sleeve.

A porter emerged from the gloom bearing my hand-luggage. In a few moments I was bestowed with Mrs. Napier Edwardes in a railway-carriage, which began to glide, to the accompaniment of fog-signals, through the blue gloom of electric light struggling with fog. Mrs. Napier Edwardes was an old friend of mine. She was one of the women who may be defined as born widows. That is to say, she is not yet, apparently, one-and-thirty; she must have had a husband once; and no one to my knowledge had ever seen him, heard of him, or even speculated upon him. Practically speaking, she had always been a widow, and seemed to enjoy the position thoroughly.

"Then am I to understand you are going down to see Bobby Margetson?" I said, as Mrs. Napier Edwardes settled herself comfortably in her seat and disposed her feet upon foot-warmers.

"Well, I suppose I shall see Bobby," she replied; "but really and truly I'm going down to see the ghost."

"The ghost?"

"Yes. Didn't you know there was a ghost at Marston Hall? It goes with the title. Quite the old-fashioned, respectable family ghost that turns up regularly when anything is going wrong. Only, the Margetsons hate talking about it. But I'm awfully interested in the subject. I'm a member of the Psychological Society, you know, and if I could find a real genuine ghost, it would give me some lovely copy.

Might even make a story. Fancy catching a real ghost!"

"Better fun than fox-hunting," I agreed.

"Oh, I've run one or two ghosts to earth, or to heaven, or wherever they belong," said Mrs. Napier Edwardes, nodding at me.

"But—tell me," I said, "I've been so long away that I'm rather out of things. Who is to be there—how does the land lie?"

Mrs. Napier Edwardes looked at me over her muff.

"Well, Tony, there will be you and I," she said. "They told me you were coming when I was invited. Then there will certainly be a houseful of men who have gone down to shoot, and a corresponding number of girls who have gone down—to fish. And then there will be Paolo Palotti, of course."

"Why do you say 'of course'?"

"What a long time you have been away!" was Mrs. Napier Edwardes's oblique reply. "Of course I said 'of course'!"

"And who is Paolo Palotti?"

She shrugged her shoulders.

"He claims to be an Italian nobleman born in the Far East, stolen later on by Red Indians, and initiated into all manner of occult arts. Anyhow, he is uncommonly good-looking, and he

has made quite a splash by palmistry and clairvoyance. I don't believe myself he was born further East than Houndsditch, or has ever been further West than Chippenham. But he has a sort of—boudoir in Bond Street during the season; and he strokes your hand and gazes into a crystal and tells you such things."

"What things?"

"Oh! I couldn't tell you. Things that you wouldn't think anybody knew but yourself. It's quite uncanny. But I love uncanny things—don't you? Then there will be Lady Margetson; one can't overlook her. You know Nita, I suppose?"

"No. Bobby only married just before I left England. What is she like?"

"Well, she's said to be very attractive. Red-gold hair and a winning way with her, you know. She's immensely popular with men."

"Ah! And you don't like her?"



Then I thought I had found out something else.

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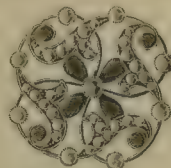
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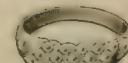


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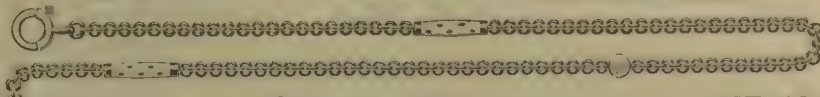
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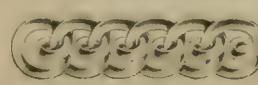
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HOW TO IMPROVE THE COMPLEXION

A CHAT ABOUT THE SKIN WITH THE LADIES.

BY ONE OF THEMSELVES.

SUPPOSE the Goddess of Beauty should suddenly appear to you, and tell you that you might choose as a gift from her one of two Loons: either features cast in the most perfect mould of form to be combined with a complexion that was worse than doubtful, or a skin of perfect purity and delicacy with features susceptible of improvement? Well, I know which I would choose, if that were proposed to me. It has been the complexion that was the source of the charm of all the famous beauties that have been immortalised in story. Why are their portraits invariably so disappointing? Simply because the painter's art could give only the shape of the features, and because this was not the real living charm. The true beauty—the clear skin, full of vitality, the eloquent blood mantling beneath the spotless, smooth, and delicately tinted cheek—evaded the brush; and therewith the beauty, which lay mainly in that, escaped the artist's copy. Rely upon it, very ordinary features will serve, if the skin be all that it should be; while spots, blebs, pimples, and such-like dreadful blemishes, must utterly destroy the charm of the most perfectly modelled face.

Why do we see so many yellow complexions, so many spotted and spoiled faces? It is only too often the direct result of impurity, artfully concealed by scents and injurious colouring matters, of most of the toilet soaps in use. Professor Attfield, the well-known practical chemist, analysed a dozen soaps, all bearing attractive titles, looking and smelling quite nice, and being sold as first-class goods by chemists. Of all the number, Dr. Attfield found only one that came up to the standard of "a good soap." This was the famous

"PEARS' TRANSPARENT SOAP."

That soap alone could be classified by the eminent chemist as "very good." I should mention that this chemical analysis was not made by order of the proprietors of the soap for advertising purposes, but made entirely independent of them in order to find out the true qualities of the various soaps.

Many of the soaps sold in pretty boxes, or smart wrappers, made pleasant to the eye by colouring, and to the nose by scent, really contain the vilest rubbish in their composition, such as we should shudder to place on our persons if we saw it undisguised. A common source of mischief is the use of medicated soaps, containing some powerful ingredient—tar, carbolic acid, turpentine, &c.—which are far too strong for the delicate skin of women and children. Babies in particular often suffer from these causes; and many teasing complaints of the skin arise from nothing else but this cause, which is not always thought of even by doctors. I write from painful experience, having once incautiously allowed my little girl of three years old to be washed with a medicated soap. Her hands and face were covered with tiny pimples, and my medical man seemed quite at a loss to know what to do with them. Happily it occurred to me that the soap might be in fault; and I substituted Pears' Soap, with the result that the spots went away in a few days. Many children, and ladies also, suffer from roughness of the skin, very irritating and annoying, and destructive to beauty, which is ascribed to the cold wind in winter and the sun in summer, while all the time it is the soap that is in fault. The most famous beauties of to-day are largely admired for their freedom from such blemishes, and several of them have borne testimony to the fact that they owe their charm in this respect to the use of Pears' Soap.

For instance, Madame Adeline Patti writes: "I have found Pears' Soap matchless for the hands and complexion." Mrs. Langtry declares that she "uses Pears' Soap, and prefers it to any other." Miss Mary Anderson states: "I have used Pears' Soap for two years with the greatest satisfaction, for I found it the very best." Not to multiply examples of such testimony, I will conclude by citing the late Dr. Anna Kingsford, who was as beautiful as she was learned, and who said: "I prefer Pears' Soap myself for the complexion to any preparation. It is delectable."

Medical testimony is equally emphatic. The late Sir Erasmus Wilson, F.R.S., President of the Royal College of Surgeons of England, wrote: "It is a balm to the skin." No fewer than Twenty Highest Awards have been awarded to this soap at as many great International Exhibitions, by juries of experts.

The keeping of the skin in a proper state is not, however, a matter of the complexion alone. The general health depends more upon the skin of the entire body being kept in a healthy state than most persons may be aware. This will be better understood by the aid of a few words of fact about the skin.

We all know how thin the covering of our bodies is; but we must not thence jump to the conclusion that there is not much to be learned about it. It can, indeed, under the microscope, be divided into two quite separate layers. If we pinch up a fold of the skin we get both these; but when we have a blister raised, whether by over-exertion of the hands or feet, or by a medicated plaster, the top is raised from the under layer. We then discover that the outer skin is hard, and does not feel pain when it is cut, any more than the hair and nails do; while the lower layer is moist and extremely sensitive. The hard outer skin, that which we see when we

look at ourselves, is called the scarf-skin or *epidermis*; the sensitive layer beneath is named the true skin, or *dermis*.

The outer layer, or scarf-skin, consists of flattened scales, of course each very tiny, but distinctly to be seen under the microscope. Lower down these are seen to be soft, plump little cells, which are always growing up to the surface as newer ones form beneath. The outer flattened and dried scales of *epidermis* are continually wearing away; it is necessary for health that they should do so, for growth is the law of the living body. The new ones grow beneath and push the older ones up to the surface, where they lose their feeling and get flat and hard, and then fall off incessantly in dust too small to be seen, and are washed off abundantly when soap and water are applied to the skin. This is how the skin is kept fresh and nice.

But the skin is more than a covering for the muscles and organs of the body. It is the principal means provided by nature for the removal from the system of the waste matters left by the performance of the functions of life. Just as a fire leaves ashes, which must be removed, or the grate will be blocked up by the waste, and the fire will not kindle, so every breath we draw, every movement we make, every thought or feeling, leaves behind in the blood the waste which must be thrown out.

The perspiration is the great way in which we get rid of the ashes of our fire of life. When we do not notice that we are perspiring at all, we are still throwing off from the skin, in the form of invisible vapour, more than an ounce of fluid every hour—more than a pint in the course of a day.

This amount passes off if the body is kept properly clean. The sweat-glands, which have the work to do of separating the waste matters from the blood, are situated in the skin, and send up little pipes that open on the surface of the *epidermis* or scarf-skin. In the whole body there are more than three million sweat-glands, each having its own opening or "pore" on the skin. This means, in other words, that there are no less than

TWENTY-EIGHT MILES

of tubing in the body engaged in the work of separating from the blood and throwing out on the surface waste matters for which the system has no further use.

Nay, it must be put more strongly to be correct. These waste matters are worse than useless; they are nothing less than poisonous if left in the blood, and will inevitably cause disease, and may cause death.

There have been some striking illustrations of the truth of this statement. One of the saddest was the following: When Pope Leo X. ascended the Papal throne a child was prepared to represent in his procession the Golden Age, which was supposed to be dawning, by being varnished all over and covered with gold-leaf; and this poor child died of the stoppage of the pores of the skin in less than six hours. Now, whenever the complete stoppage of any function causes death, its partial obstruction must do mischief in proportion. Those twenty-eight miles are not in the body for nothing, you may rely upon that.

Soap must be used to cleanse the whole body therefore, to remove the dried *epidermis* and the dirt, in order that the open mouths of the sweat-glands may act freely. Bad soap, so far from accomplishing this end, itself forms a deposit of an unhealthy character on the skin, preventing instead of aiding its work. Dr. Reveil, addressing the Paris Academy of Medicine, observed truly: "Some cheap soaps contain 30 per cent. of insoluble matter, such as lime or plaster, and others animal matter, which emits a bad smell when its solution is left exposed to the air, and, becoming rancid, causes *chronic inflammation of the skin*."

It is certainly not *cheap* to expose one's self or one's children to such evils, both of skin disease and general illness, in consequence of the obstruction to the skin's action. The pure sensation and velvety feel of the skin produced by using Pears' Soap is a cheap luxury. The proprietors claim for it—and the claim is allowed to be just by the highest authorities, professional and personal—that Pears' Transparent Soap is one of the *very few* pure soaps offered to the public. It has no irritating excess of soda, which is common in white and other badly made soaps; it contains no deleterious colouring matter, its deep brown hue being natural, and the result of age alone; it is very durable, as it can be used to the last atom, not breaking as soon as it gets thin, nor evaporating, or dissolving into water; and, finally, it has borne the test of long experience, having been invented by the late Mr. Andrew Pears, in 1807, and having been enormously used by the public ever since.

The latter is no small test of genuine excellence. Advertising may induce people to try a new invention, and bring it into temporary notoriety; but only real superiority can make them continue to use it. That Pears' Soap is, as Dr. Erasmus Wilson said, "a name engraven on the memory of the oldest inhabitant," and is to-day better known and more popular than ever, and so all the world over, too, is sufficient testimony to the fact that

PEARS' SOAP IS THE BEST.

"Oh, Nita and I are great friends."

"And what about Bobby?"

"Oh, Bobby hardly counts at Marston Hall. Of course, he's a dear old boy—one always thinks of him as old, though he's only about your age, I suppose. But one scarcely ever sees him. He shuts himself up in his study all day and does sums and things."

"Yes, the *magnum opus*."

"He's something awfully learned, and Bobby never seems to think of anything else. Oh, bother! Here are some people going to get in."

The train had stopped at Swindon, and a couple of ladies invaded our compartment. From thence to Chippenham I meditated on what Mrs. Napier Edwardes had told me. On the whole, I feared that the situation at Marston Hall was not entirely satisfactory. Certainly Bobby was not the sort of husband for a wife with red-gold hair who was immensely popular with men. However, Mrs. Napier Edwardes, as I well remembered, was a little venomous as well as amusing.

Marston Hall quite came up to its reputation as an Elizabethan mansion—all gables and ivy and red brick, whose red remained only as a warm undertone.

"Her Ladyship has gone to meet the guns, but she is expected back every moment," said the man who met us as the carriage set us down at the hall door. "Sir Robert is round in the stable-yard."

"I'll go and find him," I said.

From the stable-yard came the sharp crack of a revolver, repeated again and again, and as I turned in at the gates I saw Bobby taking aim at a miniature target stuck upon the door of a coach-house. He wheeled round at the sound of my footstep, and came towards me.

"Ah, Tony," he cried, "I was so engrossed that I didn't hear the carriage come back."

"Is that the latest fad?" I asked, nodding at the revolver, which he was swinging in his hand, when we had exchanged greetings.

"Oh, I felt I wanted some open-air exercise," said Bobby, "and I'm no good at field sports. They bore me."

We strolled together round to the drive in front of the house, talking commonplaces, as the best of friends will when they meet after three years' separation. I could not help noticing that Bobby stooped a good deal more, that the lines about his eyes were accentuated, that he had the appearance of a man already past his prime.

"Hope you're not working too hard, Bobby," I said. "You're not looking over fit."

"I've been sticking pretty close at it," he said. "But when you start on a big thing like that you can't stop. You have to keep pegging away till it's done."

"Is it nearly done?"

"Practically finished. Only a last touch or so required."

"That's good news. And what is it all about? But I suppose I shouldn't understand if you told me."

"No; you wouldn't understand. Ah, here comes my wife!"

A straggling party of men and ladies came into view. We met them on the gravel drive, and Lady Margetson and I walked together towards the house. Mrs. Napier Edwardes was quite right. The wind was puffing little coils of hair

from under her close-fitting hat, and it was red-gold. And she was wonderful. By the time we had reached the doorway I had found out something else.

"I've always heard of you as Tony," she said, "and I'm quite sure to call you Tony without thinking. It would be absurd for *you* to call me Lady Margetson. You must call me Nita."

Yes. She had a winning way with her.

"I'm so glad Bobby has rounded off his big work," I said, as we all crowded into the hall.

"Oh, you mustn't let him bore you with that. He's so absurd about it. As if it mattered in the least!" And then I thought I had found out something else.

A big fire was blazing in the hall fireplace, and in front of it stood a man whom I at once guessed to be Paolo Palotti. He was rather above the medium height; his black hair, straight and somewhat longer than is usual with men, threw into startling relief a face of abnormal pallor. His dark eyes shone curiously as he came forward and Lady Margetson introduced us.

"Mr. Palotti is a perfect wizard, so it is to be hoped you have no disgraceful secrets," said Lady Margetson.

I took an instant dislike to Palotti. I disliked his manner of looking at one through half-closed lids; I disliked, too, the familiar manner in which he patted Lady Margetson's shoulder as he deprecated the compliment paid him. However, the dislike was not mutual; for he dropped into a seat at my side, and ascertaining that the majority of the guests were strangers to me, proceeded to give me little sketches of their characters. He had, I gathered, a keen eye for character. But of the dozen and more people who lounged over tea in the hall I was interested only in three—that is to say, in Bobby, in Bobby's wife with the red-gold hair, and in Paolo Palotti. Indeed, the extraordinary thing that happened a few hours later effectually drove from my remembrance all the other men and women whose acquaintance I made that afternoon.

By half-past six most of the party had scattered to dress for dinner. I had been talking

to Bobby in the smoking-room, telling him of my doings abroad, and collecting such news as he had to give of the old college set

Coming out into the hall again, I found Mrs. Napier Edwardes standing with one foot on the first step of the big staircase, which mounted, with one turn, to the long corridor above. She beckoned to me.

"Such fun," she said. "Come up and see where the ghost walks. I've been pumping one of the maids. They all believe in it—and one of them saw it a night or two ago."

I followed Mrs. Napier Edwardes up the big staircase to the corridor.

"It's on the next floor," she said. "I hope Bobby won't catch us. He hates to have it talked about."

We mounted another thickly carpeted staircase, and came to an upper corridor, which appeared to correspond in all respects with the one below. On either side were doors, leading, doubtless, to bed-rooms. It was, perhaps, less well lighted than the lower corridor, for I could not see the end of it.



It was my privilege to take in Lady Margetson.

"There!" said Mrs. Napier Edwardes, dropping her voice almost to a whisper. "That is where she walks—a woman in black. The servants are awfully frightened. Not one of them will walk down there after nightfall."

"What nonsense!" I said.

"Well, anyway, I'm going to watch for her. I've thought out my plan. I shall bring out some rugs and sit down in that window-seat behind the curtains." She pointed to a window recess just at the top of the staircase. "I'd give anything to see her. They say she screams sometimes. And when she screams, that means something awful is going to happen to the mistress of the house. Isn't it romantic and shuddery? I hope she won't scream. It wouldn't be nice to think that anything was going to happen to Nita."

"Oh, you'll be afraid," I said.

"Not if you come and sit up with me," said Mrs. Napier Edwardes. "It would be such fun to find a ghost that could really be explained."

Not being tremendously anxious to camp out in a strange house on a chilly night, even in the company of Mrs. Napier Edwardes, I temporised. "Bobby will probably keep me up half the night talking. You see, we've got three years to catch up. But I'll come if I can get away."

As I dressed for dinner I considered the situation. Was it not a little rude to pry into a man's ghosts? Besides, if Mrs. Napier Edwardes and I were discovered together on the corridor window-seat at two in the morning people might talk. On the other hand, if Mrs. Napier Edwardes sat up alone she would probably fancy all manner of things, scream, arouse the household, and make everyone uncomfortable. I descended to dinner without having made any resolution, and found that it was my privilege to take in Lady Margetson.

It was very difficult to look at anything but Lady Margetson. I protested that I could not address her more familiarly until I had spent at least one night under her roof. In her dinner-dress of some soft and shimmery material she was ten times more beautiful than she had appeared in a severely cut walking-dress. And her red-gold hair, coming low over the forehead and leaving but the tip of an ear visible, was nothing less than marvellous. She had, too—for one can look back and analyse such situations—the faculty of giving her companion a good conceit of himself. So it was not until dinner was half-way through that I saw the portrait on the opposite wall. When I saw it I started, and armed myself with eyeglasses.

"That's an admirable study of you," I exclaimed. "And yet——"

"Oh, don't say that!" interrupted Lady Margetson, following the direction of

my eyes. "It was painted more than a century ago. She was a horrid woman. But Bobby won't have it taken down."

I caught a glance from Mrs. Napier Edwardes, who was nearly opposite me.

Twenty minutes later she passed me on her way out of the dining-room.

"Silly!" she whispered. "That was the woman who walks in the corridor."

Later on there was a little music in the drawing-room at intervals, while Paolo Palotti was good enough to give exhibitions of his skill in a remote corner. From

where I sat I could see him gently stroking the hands of pretty women and looking into their eyes. Lady Margetson, I thought, had developed a peculiar restlessness. One might almost have imagined from the way in which she hovered to and fro in the neighbourhood of Palotti that she was anxious to hear what he was saying.

"Quite as good as a play, isn't it?" said Mrs. Napier Edwardes, sitting down by my side and throwing a glance in the direction of Palotti.

"I don't quite see what you mean," I replied.

"Oh, you absurd man! Not see! Are you blind?"

"Well, is it comedy or tragedy? I think it would be tragedy if I might be allowed to kick Palotti. But I suppose manners haven't changed enough since I went away

to permit me to kick people in my host's drawing-room."

"All the same, I rather like Palotti," said Mrs. Napier Edwardes. "Though he's awfully rude sometimes. He told me just now that I had no heart. Of course I said hearts were as much luxuries as diamonds, and I couldn't afford either. That's the worst of being a poor widow. But I think it's comedy. I'll say so much for Nita. You see, you never married a man who was in love with triangles—and things."

This was so true that it closed the discussion, and in the general shuffle of the drawing-room Mrs. Napier Edwardes and I were parted.

Presently there was a move towards the billiard-room, and the drawing-room gradually emptied. I did not notice it until I found myself almost the last occupant, sitting

in an obscure corner and wondering why Bobby had not appeared since dinner. Then I suddenly remembered that I had promised someone or other to play pool. Crossing the hall, I found Lady Margetson at the foot of the staircase in conversation with Palotti. She bade me good night, and I left them together, Palotti calling after me that he was coming into the billiard-room presently, but would not take a ball at pool.

It was, perhaps, a quarter of an hour after this that I heard the billiard-room door open behind me. I was in the act of taking aim for a shot which seemed a little beyond my moderate skill, and was aiming with much deliberation. Just on the stroke Palotti's voice at my elbow said—

"Your hand has a most interesting shape. Have you ever had it read?"

Of course, I missed the stroke.



"Oh, don't say that!" interrupted Lady Margetson, following the direction of my eyes,
"It was painted more than a century ago."

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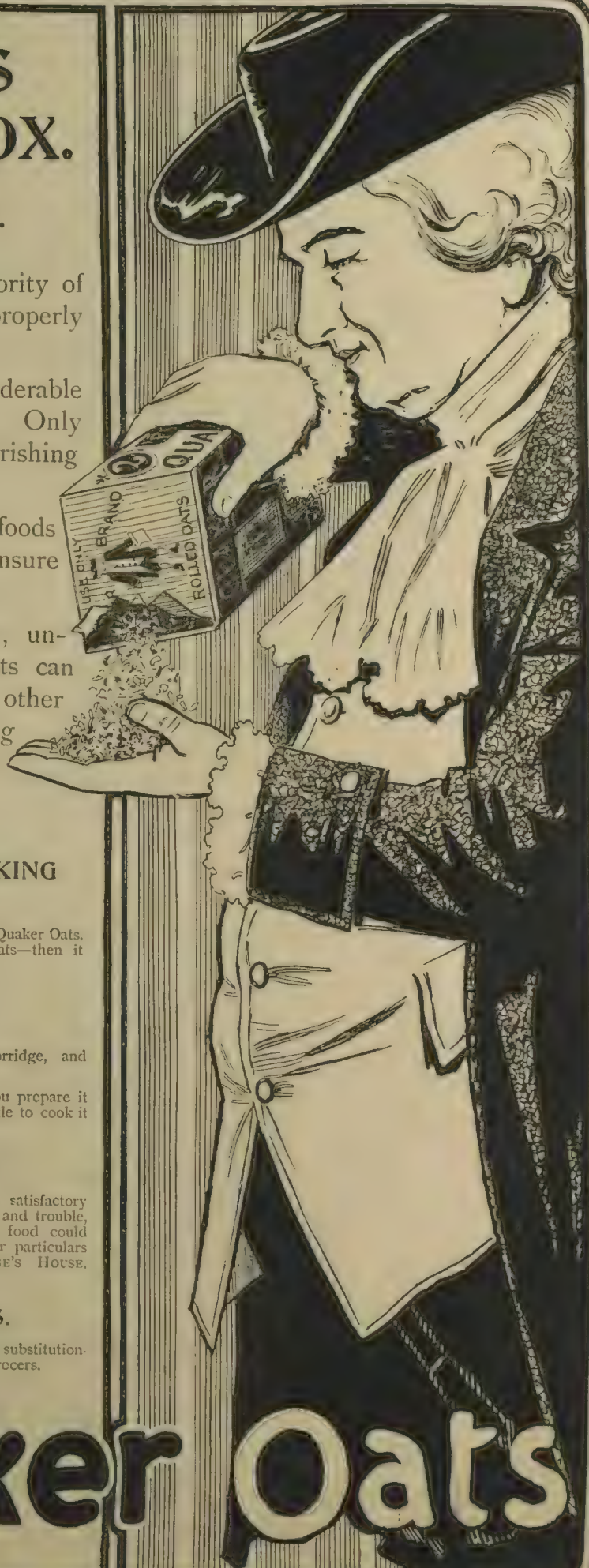
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IT FLOATS.

"You shouldn't do that, Palotti. Puts a man off, you know," said someone.

"I'm very sorry. I quite forgot," said Palotti.

"Never mind," I said, placing a hand playfully on his shoulder. "But remember in future that people have been shot like rabbits for less serious offences."

As I drew my hand away something came with it—a single long hair. I tried to shake it from my finger; the end that hung in the light of the shaded lamps over the table shone red-gold.

"Ha, ha! Only a tress of woman's hair," said the man who was about to make his stroke. "Now we know why Palotti didn't want to play pool."

"What colour was it?" asked another man.

"Black," I replied, sticking my hand in my pocket.

Palotti's eyes met mine for a moment. Then he turned away and sat down on one of the benches that ran round the room.

As I had expected, Bobby, who had not appeared since dinner, came into the billiard-room just before the game ended, and asked me to go up to his den for a smoke and a chat.

"You've known Margetson for some time, haven't you?" asked one of the men as we lingered in the hall.

I answered that we were old college friends.

"Well, then, you really ought to persuade him to take things a bit easier. After all, the world can afford to wait an extra year for his book. And if he goes on like this he'll work himself into a lunatic asylum. He's aged ten years in the last twelve months."

I replied that Margetson had just finished his book.

The clock in the hall was striking twelve as I followed Bobby upstairs to his den, which opened out of the corridor on the first floor, and as we entered I wondered if Mrs. Napier Edwardes was on sentry above. I concluded that she had not yet taken up her post, since a door slammed now and again, and male voices shouted parting chaff. It was a comfortable den in which Bobby worked. The shelves were lined with books of which even the titles

were unintelligible to me. But the brightly burning fire was faced by a deep-seated sofa, and flanked by easy-chairs. A shaded reading-lamp lighted the writing-table, and as I passed I noticed a half-filled sheet of manuscript paper, a Bible, and a box of cigars. For a moment I wondered at the Bible, for Bobby had never struck me as a religious man; but my attention wandered to the cigars.

"Well, Bobby, so the great work's done," I said, when my cigar was well alight and my feet were on the fender.

"All but the preface; I'm just writing that," said Bobby, from the table at which he was mixing whiskies-and-sodas. "Just a modest preface, in which I explain that I have cleared up a misconception—a misconception that——"

He was holding out my glass with one hand, the other was on his forehead. I peered at his eyes, which had suddenly gone out as when one extinguishes a candle.

"What was I saying?" he asked.

"Oh! you're over-tired, old chap. Don't explain it, because I shouldn't understand."

"No, of course you wouldn't understand," he said, and began walking to and fro.

"Oh, come and sit down, Bobby," I said; "you want a rest."

Bobby's pacing to and fro grew more rapid.

"No, I can't rest — till I've laid it," he said. "Tony, how do you lay a ghost?"

"I think I should crack it over the head."

I replied, "or make a hole in it with a bullet. Both ways are fairly efficacious."

"You don't believe in ghosts?"

"Certainly not."

He was walking very quickly backwards and forwards, and turning suddenly at the end of the room by the door, said—

"You would if you owned this house. Every night—every night"—he emphasised it with his forefinger as he came towards me—"every night the same thing happens. You have heard of it?"



"Stop him! For God's sake, stop him!"

"There has been talk—idle talk," I replied. "But I shouldn't worry about it."

"You don't know what it means to me. I haven't spoken of it to anyone else, Tony; but when that woman walks in the corridor above, it's a sign that something is going to happen to Nita. Do you know that?"

"Well, I've heard that there's some connection between this alleged ghost and the lady of the house; but, of course, it's all nonsense."

"Ah, they've been talking about it! And you know that when the woman—the woman upstairs—screams, that which is going to happen is at hand, eh? You can't conceive how that has been on my nerves lately. But I know what to do. I know what to do now."

In his walking to and fro he had reached the table by my elbow, on which the reading-lamp stood. He halted, and leaning on the table, looked into my eyes.

"Don't mention it, Tony," he said. "I wouldn't tell anyone but you. But every night I listen for that scream."

For a moment or two I sat looking up at him, and something told me that Bobby was in love with his wife still. The silence was unbroken, save by the ticking of the clock upon the mantelpiece. Then a coal fell from the grate. Silence again. And then came the scream.

It was not very loud, but quite clear and sharp through the silence; and I shall never forget the look in Bobby's eyes as it reached us.

"Stop!" I cried. "I know what it is!"

But Bobby was in front of me. Snatching something from the table, he had dashed open the door and reached the corridor before I had pushed back my chair, and got round the sofa. Outside, the lights had been extinguished, but I could just see him disappearing in the gloom of the staircase leading to the upper corridor. I plunged and mounted behind him, noticing as I went that on the thickly carpeted stairs our footfalls were almost noiseless. At the top I hesitated a moment, being uncertain of my direction in the gloom. My arm was clutched.

"Stop him! For God's sake stop him!"

It was Mrs. Napier Edwardes's voice.

But my eyes were not yet accustomed to the darkness, and I could not see him. Only, some distance down the corridor, I could discern a dim shadow—a shadow which moved. And as it moved there was a flash and a sharp crack from a point about half-a-dozen yards ahead of me, and the shadow became a dim heap upon the floor.

It is not easy to tell the events that followed in the order of their occurrence. I can only remember standing in a flood of light before an open door, Mrs. Napier Edwardes's hand still clutching my arm. In the doorway stood Paolo Palotti facing

Bobby Margetson. And between them lay Nita, her red-gold hair already stained with blood. I remember the sound of opening doors, of questioning voices. I remember, too—I shall never forget it—the expression of Bobby's face as he turned, waved his revolver in the air, and burst into horrid laughter. I caught him by the legs. . . .

It must have been nearly four in the morning when I noticed the light still burning in Bobby's den. Much dreadful detail had been gone through. The guests had at last separated to snatch such slumber as was possible. On the table was my half-smoked cigar. Years seemed to have passed since I dropped it there as I sprang after Bobby. It was impossible to sleep, and as I mechanically picked up the cigar-stump, my eye fell on the written page beside it: the preface to Bobby's book. I thought of Bobby, held down in his bed by a groom and one of the footmen. The preface would in all likelihood never be finished; but the book was complete. I began reading. Three times I read it before the meaning of the fragment dawned upon me. Then I rose, lit another cigar, and opened the Bible which lay upon the table. I opened it somewhere in the Gospel According to St. Luke. Upon the broad margin a curious array of letters and figures appeared, carefully written against each line of text.

"Oh! it's quite impossible to go to bed," said Mrs. Napier Edwardes, appearing in the doorway. "I feel as though I could never sleep again. What are you doing?"

"I've just discovered what Bobby Margetson has been working at all this time."

Mrs. Napier Edwardes came into the room and leaned against the sofa. The fire had burnt itself out, and she shivered slightly.

"Well?"

"He has been counting," I said, "the various letters in the New Testament. So many a's, so many b's, and so on. And he hopes to carry the research through the whole Bible."

Mrs. Napier Edwardes opened her mouth as if to speak, but said nothing for a moment or two.

"Only that?" It came in an awed whisper.

"That is his *magnum opus*," I said.

"Then that explains —"

"It explains everything."

"Ah—yes—everything. But, of course, nothing matters to Nita now."

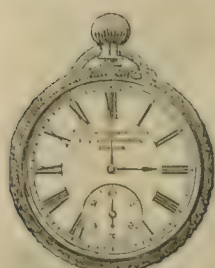
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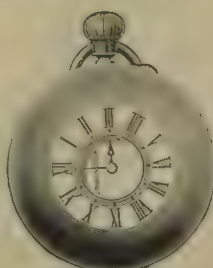
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That hurry her car,
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THE SPIRIT OF WINTER.

She touches the waters
With pitiless hand,
But warm is the mantle
She flings round the land.

BOHEMIA v. BOURGEOISIA

MEN laugh at women's friendships. Perhaps mine for Diana was the much-quoted exception which proves the rule. We were utter contrasts to one another. I was plain, she was beautiful; our very nicknames, mine Pegtop, hers Diana, emphasised the differences between us. We had first met in Paris at Julian's art-school, and after our return home we shared a studio in one of the quietest of Chelsea byways. The cynic who reads this simple story will exclaim: "Diana naturally fell in love." Not so. The first rift in our friendship—indeed, the whole mischief, first and last—was brought about by a baby.

Diana is one of those few women who are both good and beautiful. She impresses the weak, the ailing, and the selfish as ready to bear the burden of the whole sad world on her strong young shoulders; and so, when her married sister calmly asked her to turn her—nay, *our*—studio into a temporary nursery, of course she at once assented.

Sadly I withdrew my few possessions, and the baby, together with its nurse, a gorgeous person who soon turned Diana into the most submissive of nursery-maids, was formally installed. One day, late in December, I received a kindly worded little note asking me if I would care to come on New Year's Eve. "You will have to help me with baby," she wrote, "for I am giving nurse a holiday. But he is absolutely no trouble, and we will have a cosy little talk over our next summer holiday." Ah, me! That next summer Diana was on her honeymoon.

When I saw our old studio under



Instantly she held out her arms for the child.

its new conditions I realised for the first time that there was something to be said for Bourgeoisie after all. The white-winged cot, sharply outlined against the pale green walls and yellow sloping ceiling, made a delightful mass of colour. Impromptu effects of light and shade were created by the tiny garments hanging on Diana's idle easels, and the low nursery-chair recalled the quaint priedieus in the church of a Breton fishing-village; while my dear Diana, in a large flannel apron almost covering her bright blue studio-gown, looked more like Ceres than like the fleet-footed goddess whose name she had borrowed.

"At eleven," she said, settling me down comfortably by the fire, "baby must have his bottle. Nurse has left everything quite ready, and the only thing we shall have to do will be to warm the milk."

And then the evening wore itself away. We planned out our summer tour in Normandy, and I discussed, doubtless for the twentieth time, my next Academy picture—the picture which was to bring me fame and fortune. "You have such a splendid imagination," said the dear soul. "As for me, I am only fit to mind a baby!" And as she rose and leaned over the cot I begged her to remain as she was for a few moments while I caught the pose of her slim, rounded figure. But even as I spoke, the little creature stirred, and waved about its tiny hands; in a moment Diana had him in her arms. "Yes, that will do almost as well," I observed equably; "I think I shall paint you standing just as you now are, and call my picture 'A Modern Madonna.'"

"Don't be silly, Pegtop!" she cried sharply. "If you don't warm the milk quickly he will begin to cry. Put down

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HEALTH WEALTH, AND BEAUTY

that stupid charcoal. All you have to do is to stand the bottle in the hot water till the thermometer marks *ninety*."

Now, I am not by any means a good-tempered woman, and, perhaps, because I felt flurried, or more probably because I did not think it really mattered, I must confess that after I had carried out her instructions the thermometer marked ninety-eight.

For a few moments all went well; indeed, a smile flickered indeterminately over the pursed-up rosebud of a mouth. "Do look, Pegtop; he is *roaring* with laughter!" cried Diana fondly, and then as if to punish her for this grotesque untruth, the creature gave a sudden scream. There followed a most distressing half-hour. A sound-demon seemed to have entered into the tiny infant. He yelled, he shouted, he moaned and gasped, till at last even I grew seriously alarmed. As for Diana, she was almost distracted.

"If this goes on," she said suddenly, "baby will have a fit, then he will die, and what shall I say to Flora? You must go out into the street, Pegtop, and bring in the first kind-looking person you meet. It doesn't matter whether

it's a man or a woman, as long as *she* is motherly or *he* is fatherly. An experienced nurse can work wonders!"

"My dear Diana, are you quite mad?" I asked with some heat, "or do you wish me to be taken for a lunatic?"

"I used to think, Margaret, that you were fond of me."

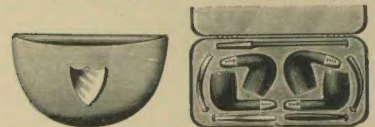
The reproachful words sounded below the terrible uproar which the baby was making. I did not stop to put on my hat, and as I ran along the passage which separated the studio from the quiet road I thought to myself: "After all, Diana is a woman of resource. Most people have had to do with babies at some time in their lives. I will bring in the first good-natured creature who comes this way."

But alas! no motherly soul passed by. The very houses on either side had an inclement, inhospitable air. I was just about to re-enter the arena of wailing screams when suddenly a tall, fair young man surged out of the gloom. Immediately my too vivid imagination conjured up a picture of the patient young father of a family who, after a long day's work, walks up and down all night, the baby in his arms. Accordingly, though feeling it a forlorn hope, I said with as good a grace as I could muster: "As you can hear for yourself, there is a

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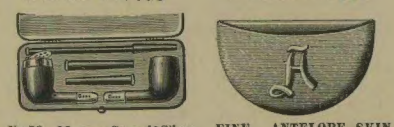
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"Dear Sirs—I am pleased to tell you that, as far back as 1881 I used your Roche's Embrocation on my little girl, then a baby three months old, who had had Hooping Cough for ten days, and had fallen away to almost a skeleton in that short time. I took her into Hampshire, to my home, and directly my mother heard her cough she said: 'That baby has Hooping Cough, and gave me the remains of a bottle of Roche's Embrocation, which she had kept by her. I used it according to the directions, and found it cured her in two days. I then sent for another bottle, and in three weeks the cough was quite gone; the child commenced to make flesh, and is now a strong girl of sixteen years of age, a wonder to all who knew her at that time.'"

"I afterwards used the Embrocation on a little girl, three years old, who was cured in seventeen days during the Christmas holidays, without any return of the cough. People wondered and asked what had cured her? I told them it was Roche's Embrocation.
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"I remain, Sirs, sincerely, ELIZA C. DAW."

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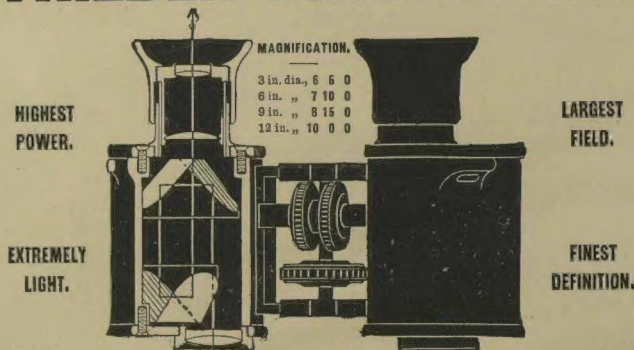
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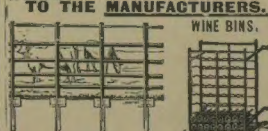
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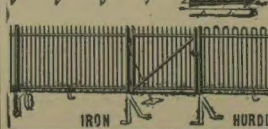
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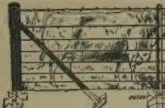
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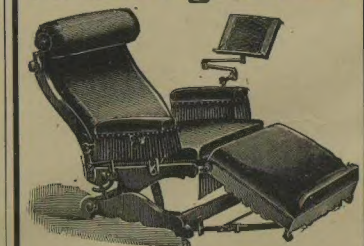
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baby in there whose conduct is causing a great deal of trouble. Perhaps you have an exceptional knowledge or experience of infants?"

With slow deliberate accents, my good-looking Samaritan answered: "If your infant is ill I will certainly come in and look at it."

At the time the remark did not strike me as extraordinary; a moment later Diana, the embodiment of lovely gratitude, had placed her little nephew in his arms. As the screaming subsided, I heard my sensible, dignified Diana, her trembling voice full of tears, make the extraordinary remark: "I suppose, Sir, that you once had a friend who was a baby?"

"I have been friends with many babies," he answered quite gravely, and even then we neither of us realised what was, of course, quite obvious—namely, that our welcome friend was a doctor. I must admit that in his arms the spirit of unrest left the baby, and we lavished on him far more gratitude than he deserved. He said but little. "The child's milk was evidently over-heated," was his only uncalculated remark, which won me a reproachful look from Diana.

As the minutes passed by, and all that remained of the recent storm was an occasional gasp or gurgle, I expected the stranger to go on his way. But he did nothing of the kind.

"I think we have detained you quite long enough," I said at last.

"Surely I had better stop till the little fellow is quite asleep," he answered slowly. "It is nearly midnight. I was walking to St. Paul's, in order to sing the New Year in. Now it is too late. But you know," he added quickly, "it is

considered very lucky to have one's first case on New Year's Eve, so, believe me, I have nothing to regret. Still, now perhaps I ought to be going?" And he gazed uncertainly at Diana.

Instantly she held out her arms for the child, and, with the pretty manner that has always endeared her to her friends, said, smiling—

"Indeed yes; we have kept you far too long, but I feel quite proud at being able to offer a doctor his first fee."

The colour rushed into his face. "Nay," he said, "no doctor ever accepts a fee from his first case. Surely you would not wish to bring me bad luck!" And then we all sat down again.

Diana, who has a very sympathetic manner, made him tell us all about himself: how he was but freshly arrived from the North, and how lonely he felt in London.

A vision of what was coming rose up before me, and had it not been that even then Andrew (as she now makes me call him) had only eyes and ears for her, he would surely not have stayed to supper, forcing his company on two people, one of whom, at least, showed him very clearly how little she desired it.

Did doctor ever make more of his first case? I doubt it. He came the next day, and the day after that. "He is so fond of baby," said Diana. Then he would come morning and evening. "He is so lonely," whispered Diana.

They were married that June, and now they have a baby of their own, whom Andrew has insisted should be christened Margaret.—M. A. BELLOC-LOWNDES.

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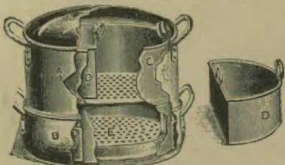
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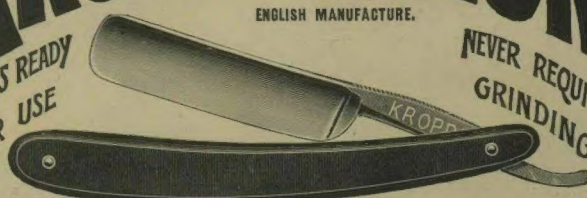
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